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New Statesman

WOMEN'S BOOKS

PLUS: Miners' 13th week • Peter Kellner on Labour's defeat • Military rule in Nigeria • Drugs on trial

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New Statesman

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War of attrition or manoeuvre
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Reagan's sting in the Gulf
Claudia Wright reports the flaws in the West's efforts to defend the oil-flow p.16

Cover drawing: Christine Roche

Women's books 1984
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NFT

To coincide with the GLC JOBS FOR A CHANGE Festival, the National Film Theatre is presenting a one-day programme of films, videos and discussions covering a wide range of aspects of employment and unemployment.

SUNDAY 10 JUNE
National Film Theatre, South Bank SE1

2.00 **Boys from the Blackstuff 'Jobs for the Boys'** (admission free)
2.00 **Videos about women and work or unemployment plus seminar** (admission free)
2.30 **That Sinking Feeling** (dir. Bill Forsyth) (admission 50p)
3.30 **Boys from the Blackstuff 'George's Last Ride'** (admission free)
4.30 **Looks and Smiles** (dir. Ken Loach) (admission 50p)
5.00 **The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter** (dir. Connie Field) (admission 50p)
6.30 **Meantime** (dir. Mike Leigh) (admission free)
6.30 **Doll's Eye** (dir. Jan Worth) (admission 50p)
8.30 **Nine to Five** (film version — dir. Colin Higgins) (admission 50p)
8.30 **Discussion with Ken Loach, Barry Hines, Jan Worth and Alan Thornett on the control of the media and the portrayal of employment and its lack in film and TV** (admission free)

This event is open to the public
No pre-booking

JOBS FOR A CHANGE

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New Statesman Vol 107 No 2777 8 June 1984

A failure before it began

AS WE GO to press, the final arrangements are being made for the three-day London economic summit. The communiqué will already have been drafted. The main diplomatic problem has been to cope with European criticism of the size of the US budget deficit and the level of US interest rates. Europeans somehow always find something to criticise in the state of the US economy — either it is expanding too fast, or not fast enough, the dollar is too high, or it's too low.

The fact is that in an election year neither President nor Congress is going to do much to cut Federal spending, or increase Federal taxation. In any case, we should be grateful at least for the fact that the Reagan Administration has not allowed its superficial adherence to monetarist dogma to stop old-fashioned, Keynesian, deficit financed growth. The recession over the past four years would have been substantially worse for all if President Reagan had actually done what he said he was going to do.

As to substance, it can be confidently predicted in advance that the summit will achieve nothing. The reason is simple. As they cavort on the beaches of Normandy, squeezing glory out of yesteryear, Presidents Reagan and Mitterrand and Mrs Thatcher have not a positive idea in their combined heads of an initiative that could lead the world out of its profound economic crisis. (Indeed, by refusing to invite Chancellor Kohl they have not even had the imagination to turn the 40th anniversary of D-Day into a symbol of European reconciliation).

On the actual D-Day there were at least minds actively engaged on the questions of economic reconstruction. At Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944 this culminated in the establishment of the essential framework of the post-war international economic order under the auspices of the United Nations — the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, fixed exchange rates. With hindsight the three decades that followed Bretton Woods have almost taken on the aura of an economic golden age. No comparable vision will have passed through the rooms of Lancaster House this week.

IT DOES not require economic expertise, which in any case none of the principals at the summit possesses, to comprehend the lunacy of the situation in which the world economy now finds itself. On present trends the developing world will be exporting capital to the developed for the rest of this decade at least. This is because the new money they will be allowed, or can afford, to borrow will be less than the total of interest and principal that they are already due to repay.

The theory of economic development is thus being stood on its head. In theory, the industrial system should generate capital to invest in the Third World. It should then provide markets for the output of the Third World, allowing it to earn enough to service its debt. Instead, unless something is done urgently, the developing countries will be expected to cut back their already inadequate consumption in order to generate the savings required to keep Western banks in business. This is not only the economics of the madhouse. It is also immoral for the richest countries in the world to behave in this way: and calculated to undermine governments attempting to act democratically. But that will not disturb the complacency of Lancaster House.

Madness, too, is the current contribution of the IMF to the crisis. In part this is institutional. The Fund was set up to provide member countries with foreign exchange on a temporary basis at times when their balance of payments is under pressure. Its concern, therefore, was with getting a country's balance of payments back into surplus, not with the future performance of its economy as such. The IMF, therefore, has only one prescription for a country in trouble — devalue the currency (to encourage export earnings and discourage exports) and cut back on public and private consumption (to release resources to improve the balance of payments).

THE ROLE of the IMF is the more pernicious here because of its relationship with the international banking system. The overwhelming bulk of finance for the Third World comes not from the IMF (or the World Bank for that matter), but from commercial banks. Yet the business they do is not banking in the real sense of assessing risk and reflecting it in the terms of the loan. The banks have come to rely heavily on the IMF to provide in effect a 'banking seal of approval'. If the IMF is happy enough with the economic policy that it has forced on a member government, then it will also lend. If not, not.

There is no way out of this bind unless the governments of the industrial countries are prepared to create a new fund, whose purpose is not simply to adjust the balance of payments. It needs to be a fund that is used to give international approval to countries following a sustainable programme of economic growth, which may well involve sustained periods of overall balance of payments deficit. We regard it as perfectly natural, within the confines of a nation state, for one region to run a permanent balance of payments deficit with the rest of the country. It is done automatically through the mechanisms of government spending and taxation and explicitly through the whole range of regional policy.

If there is no progress in these directions in the near future — and the likely re-election of President Reagan in the autumn would not augur well for an American initiative — the developing world will be justified in taking direct action on its own. The summit meeting of debtor countries that is taking place next week in Bogota could have a more substantial agenda than this week's meeting in London.

When developing countries were getting our capital and needed our markets, they had a motive for being polite. But now they are not getting the money and are increasingly being excluded from the markets. What is more, if they acted together, they would have it in their power to bring down the greater part of the West's banking system. Then the West might do something. □

NEXT WEEK

Peter Odell: Refining our oil — Britain loses out again

Barbara Ehrenreich: Feminism in the US

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A new Dad's Army to counter Soviet threat?

A CAMPAIGN for a new Dad's Army backed by several senior military figures is reaching its climax this month with an all-out effort to obtain Ministry of Defence approval.

The idea for a Home Defence Force was launched in March last year with the support of, among others, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey and General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, a former commander in chief of allied forces (Northern Europe). It aims to set up a volunteer force of 700,000, including air and naval sections, dividing into 20,000 platoons based in towns, villages and factories.

Advertisements in support of the idea have recently been appearing in the guns and shooting press, as part of the 'Hedgehog Campaign', a public relations exercise which the founders hope will bring about the Home Defence Force. (The significance of the hedgehog is that it destroys invading pests and is a prickly customer). One advertisement, asking for signatures on a petition to the government says: 'We seek the signatures of folk who believe there may be a non-nuclear Soviet threat to this country — defence begins at home.'

The campaign organisers intend to tap a 'prospective defence potential within the civilian population', aiming their recruitment primarily at holders of firearms certificates. The intention is to have each platoon armed with self-loading rifles and sub-machine guns and the holders would keep their weapons at home, as armouries are considered too risky.

The first aim of the Hedgehog Campaign is to persuade the government to assist, or at least permit, the formation of such a force. Richard Munday, associate editor of *Handgunner*, wrote in the current issue of the magazine: 'If the MoD's hesitance over the proposals [for a home defence force] still really come down to a matter of cost, we would suggest they accept the scheme without *any* formal funding and provide only the framework of command and control.' Private funds would then be sought.

Secondly, the campaign is urging supporters to write lobbying their MPs and to collect signatures for a petition, which must apparently be sent to their London HQ by 15 June for, according to the publicity, 'reasons which will be apparent at the end of the month'.

The aim is to collect thousands of signatures from people 'ready to stand up and be counted'. The Hedgehog supporters emphasise that the proposed role of the Home Defence Force will not infringe civil liberties.

To allow force members to have their weapons at home, there would have to be an amendment to the firearms certificates entitling them to bear arms for home defence duties. The secretary of the campaign, Colonel Michael Hickey, sees 'no constraints on the type of weapons' which would be acceptable for this purpose although certificates are generally not issued for the sort of combat weapons which the Home Defence Force sponsors mention in their publicity.

The Ministry of Defence has so far refused to endorse the idea for the force but Colonel Hickey told the *NS* that he is confident it will be set up in August or September.

Paul Griffiths

New rules for suicides

THE HOME OFFICE has changed the rules governing the conduct of coroners' hearings to exclude the verdict of 'lack of care' in cases of suicide.

In two recent cases, this verdict was seen as a victory for campaigners concerned about the events which led up to the deaths. Eighteen year-old Jim Heather-Hayes killed himself in July 1982 in Ashford Remand Centre in Kent while awaiting sentence and Matthew Paul, also 18, hanged himself last December in a London police station after being held for 36 hours without being charged and having been denied access to a solicitor, family or friends.

The new 1984 rules say that the words 'aggravated by lack of care/ self neglect' may be added to the verdicts of death from natural causes, industrial disease, drug abuse or want of attention at birth, but in no other cases, thereby ruling out suicide. The Home Office deny that the change was influenced by the Heather-Hayes or Matthew Paul verdicts of suicide aggravated by, and suicide due to, lack of care A Home Office spokesperson said: 'The change has been on the cards for at least two years. It is a consolidation of existing rules.'

But Inquest, the pressure group which is trying to reform the inquest system, has criticised the change. Its spokesperson, Tony Ward, said: 'These two cases established an important new principle. The immediate cause of death was suicide but behind the suicide was the lack of care which led to it, just as much as in, say, a case of accidental death.'

Dr John Burton, secretary of the Coroners' Society, welcomes the change in the rules: 'lack of care was a blunderbuss; a delphic remark that could be interpreted in any way. It signifies a disapproval of something but does not say what is disapproved of. It is better to say what has to be done to rectify the problem.'

But the rules are not legally binding as they are simply guidelines. Already, almost one in a hundred verdicts differ from the forms laid out in the rules leaving some leeway for juries.

Rosalind Bayley

Where will you be on 9 June?

FIRST, THERE were to be no demonstrations. Now, three are planned on Saturday (9 June) to mark President Reagan's visit here.

Originally, CND's national council voted in January not to have a demonstration against Reagan. But a group of CND activists in a faction called Action 84 managed to get the decision changed at the March council meeting and two events have now received the CND mark of approval: a straightforward march starting at midday along 'demo lane' from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, followed by a rally in the Square, and an encirclement of the US embassy in Grosvenor Square from midday to 3pm. CND hopes that demonstrators will be allowed into the Square and is confident that enough people will be present to surround the building and block access roads.

But some Action 84 members were still not satisfied and, renaming themselves Summit 84, are planning a blockade of Lancaster House where the summit is being held. Spokesperson Nicolas Walter told the *NS*: 'We felt that encircling the embassy was a strictly symbolic thing to do as the building is closed on Saturdays and also that the focus should not only be on the US'. He recognises that given the location of Lancaster House (on the Mall, near Buckingham Palace) the blockade will have to be at a considerable distance from the building.

Details of CND activities from 01-263 0977 and Summit 84 from Nicolas Walter on 01-226 7251.

Two sides of intimidation

IN ALL the noisy storm of Mrs Thatcher's rage about striking miners the reports from strikers that they too are being intimidated have not been heard. In the civil war that is being pursued in the Midlands coalfield villages, threats of violence have equally been made to those supporting the union action.

Geoff Peace, an NUM branch secretary who lives in Mansfield, says he has received phone calls threatening assault. His colleague Malcolm Howarth who lives nearby in the pit village of Blidworth says he has received anonymous calls saying he will be stabbed if he does not return to work. Two wing mirrors have been taken from his car since the dispute started. In the same village, striking miner Mark Swindell has had brake fluid poured over the bonnet and boot of his car, corroding the paint. One striking miner in the village has had his window smashed in, others have received threatening notes.

So far no one has been arrested for any of these acts and Nottinghamshire police say that although strikers have been threatened, most of the initimidation is against those who are still working. These victims of violence will have their claims for compensation sympathetically considered by the NCB, although 'there will be no question of payments to striking miners,' an NCB spokesperson said.

John Pearcey

Murdo McCleod/Contact

The London Connection: last week 'Pik' Botha, this week Ronald Reagan, next week General Pinochet? Above, 2 June demo.

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The Beeb and the Bomb

DETAILED government plans for control of the press and broadcasting services in a pre-war crisis have recently been spelt out by a Central Office of Information official.

According to Pat Abbott of the COI, writing in *Fission Fragments*, a magazine for government scientists, the government intends to 'keep people informed, advised and motivated' even though 'a full-scale nuclear assault on the United Kingdom with its widespread death, destruction and injury will almost certainly knock out central government as we know it'.

Two wartime committees will be set up under a government minister responsible for information policy. A 'standing committee on information policy' will issue instructions to the public and the Prime Minister's press secretary would direct a press working party, housed close to Downing Street, involving BBC and IBA representatives.

The article is coy about arrangements for censorship, although, in fact, censorship directions would be a principal task for both committees. But it reveals that the government has prepared master copies of 30 official announcements on available emergency powers, including mobilisation, and manpower controls. (i.e. military and industrial conscription). Mr Abbott acknowledges that before a nuclear attack, all TV and radio stations would close down and a single national radio channel, the Wartime Broadcasting Service, would take over. It would be run by specially selected BBC staff, using a network of fallout protected transmitters.

But this policy may be revised to keep light entertainment on television in 'an attenuated form' until the bomb drops. After that, COI staff will have 'a good opportunity to exercise our ingenuity' in running and information service, designed 'to counter rumour and sustain law and order'.

Duncan Campbell

Report delay as cancer facts mount

MINISTERS will have to wait until early next month to find out whether Sir Douglas Black has been able to rule out the Sellafield (Windscale) nuclear plant as the cause of an excess of leukaemia in parts of Cumbria.

Black's enquiry, set up in November after Yorkshire Television claimed the incidence of the disease near the plant was ten times the national average, was due to report last month. But it has received so much information — including an official report of abnormally high rates of leukaemia on the west coast of Scotland (see last week's *NS*), which is directly in the pathway of tides carrying contamination from the plant — that members of Black's team will not meet to agree a draft until 28 June.

After Ministers have studied it, the report should be published by the DHSS in late July.

The government would obviously be relieved if Black's findings gave Sellafield a clean bill of health. But epidemiologists from the MRC's environmental epidemiology unit at Southampton University have already confirmed an excess of leukaemia in people under 25 near the plant.

The difficulty facing Black is the fact that it is impossible to distinguish between a radiation-induced cancer and one caused by some other factor. 'We're not going to be able to give a cut and dried answer,' says Dr Eileen Rubery, medical secretary to the Black inquiry. 'We're only going to be able to say we don't think there is a problem, or we think there might be and it's worth looking into various aspects in more detail.'

Given Black's record as an independent scientist, and the mounting evidence of excesses of leukaemia near nuclear plants, the most likely outcome next month is a larger, long-term investigation.

Joan Smith

MISCELLANY

Unto death

The mud-slinging between the Alliance parties in Newham just won't stop. We're not interested in any more detail of the sordid goings-on over the two council by-elections to be held next Thursday. But Virginia Taylor, one of the two SDP candidates who withdrew from standing against the Liberals after a last-minute plea from Dr Death himself, has now written to us. She questions our use of the word 'incumbent' to describe the Liberal councillors, Ann and Rif Winfield, who caused the by-election by being disqualified on the insistence of the SDP (*NS* 25 May). She says: 'Had it been publicly known during the 1982 council elections that a false declaration had been made, it is highly unlikely that the Winfields would have ever been elected in the first place!' And they call it an alliance?

Giving it away

Who says that the Tory party is the party of owner-occupation? Labour's Oonagh McDonald has proposed raising the limit for tax relief on mortgages by £1,000 to £31,000 in the committee discussing the Finance Bill. Ignoring the fact that mortgage tax relief is a subsidy for the rich and the reasonably well-off, Dr McDonald said that the limit affected many first time buyers in her Thurrock constituency. Treasury minister Barney Heyhoe put her straight by pointing out that the government had raised the limit by £5,000 last year. With large sections of the Tory party and the Tory press recognising that the days of mortgage tax relief may be numbered, how can a Labour Treasury spokesperson not have noticed that the debate on the subject has gone beyond the 'how much money can we give away' stage?

Star gazing

Whatever the long-term future of the Communist Party, the current round of AGMs of the People's Press Printing Society, owner of the *Morning Star*, is unlikely to cause an immediate split or resolve the conflict. Those backing the *Star* as the banner-holder for the Stalinist faction (they are fielding ingenue MP Ernie Roberts) hoped the AGMs would yield them a clear numerical and political victory. This would have given them, at the least, absolute control over the PPPS and its assets; at most it would give them political domination of the CP, driving out the Eurocommunists. However, by closing down the Glasgow AGM because the members voted not to end discussion of the CP's resolution on ditching the editor (and not because as the *Star* claimed they were intolerably unruly) the *Star* has lost moral ground. More importantly, it has handed the CP a good reason to organise for a Special AGM which, unlike the ordinary AGM, has the power to elect an entirely new management committee. The problem for the Party is that, even if it succeeds in getting its five candidates elected, it still does not have a majority on the 15-member committee. Provisional estimates suggest that the *Star* had a majority at Nottingham and Manchester AGMs, but lost at Sheffield. The Party is likely to have a majority in Birmingham and Bristol but it is the London meeting next Sunday which is likely to be decisive — and stormier than any meeting of British communists hitherto assembled.

Halved at a stroke

Last week's anti-Botha demonstration was attended by 15,000 people

(*The Times*), 25-30,000 (*Guardian*), 20-40,000 (*Observer*) or 40,000 (ITN). The BBC quoted 15,000 and 20,000 on different programmes, but only the *Sunday Times* had different figures on the same page. In an article it mentioned 20,000 protestors, while the picture caption above said 10,000. Has new editor Andrew 'Two Chauffeurs' Neil started writing the picture captions as well?

Times change

We have regularly chronicled the sad decline of proper journalism at the *Sunday Times* under its new Murdoch-appointed editor. We have paid less attention to *The Times*'s relentless pursuit of the *Daily Telegraph* market under *its* new Murdoch editor, Charlie Douglas-Home. The latest casualty of the slide down market and to the right is Richard Davy, its much respected expert on the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the two Germanies. After 29 years on *The Times* Davy has been told to stop writing leading articles. Offered a 'non-option' writing job, he has chosen to quit. The reason for the bust-up, our spies in Gray's Inn Road tell us, is that Davy cannot go along with the paper's new super-Reaganite view of East-West relations. The end of *The Times* as the thinking person's paper on these issues came last summer, when it published a series of three leading articles titled 'The Soviet Challenge'. They were written by Ian Elliot, the right-wing academic from Brighton poly. Presumably Charlie D-H thinks that the Brighton line on the Kremlin will attract more readers (and please Murdoch more) than Davy's more thoughtful analysis.

Synthetic history

Margaret Thatcher's journey down nostalgia gulch in Normandy this week was just a little one-sided. By courtesy of Gallup, which has published a complete set of its poll findings between 1937 and 1975 (£25 from Gallup, 202 Finchley Road, London, NW3), we can rediscover what people really felt in 1944. Mrs T may, or may not, be pleased to learn that levels of approval for Churchhill (around 90 per cent all year) and his government (75 per cent) were roughly double today's PM and government ratings; even so, Labour was ahead in every voting intention poll Gallup conducted in the last two years of the war. The reason? Public attitudes that were a million miles from Thatcherism. Fifty-four per cent favoured nationalisation of the railways, 55 per cent wanted the creation of a publicly-run health service, and 60 per cent wanted the coal mines taken over by the state. In June 1944, the month of D-Day, Gallup asked: 'During the changeover from war to peace, should the changeover be done mainly under government control, or should it be left mainly to private business?' Only 14 per cent said private business; 68 per cent favoured government control. Mrs Thatcher thinks we should invoke the spirit of the British at the time of D-Day. We agree.

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£500,000 lost in Liverpool's budget crisis

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL is entering its third month without a budget while the Department of the Environment, the councillors of all three parties and the district auditor are reluctant to force a showdown.

According to its chief accountant, Roy Williams, 'up to the end of May, it has cost the council £½ million in extra interest charges because of the rates not being collected'. Yet, the district auditor, Leslie Stanford, told the *NS*: 'At present, I have not been able to ascertain that there has been any financial loss caused by the conduct of the councillors and therefore I have no power to intervene. There is no law which says *when* a council has to set its budget'. Stanford has made it clear that he does not intend to intervene until the council actually passes an 'illegal' budget.

This is fortunate for all the councillors as both Labour and opposition councillors could be liable if through their negligence they have incurred the council extra costs. And failing to try to force a budget could be seen as negligent.

Tory leader Chris Hallows recognises this but said that he was keeping out of the fray for the moment as discussions with the government were carrying on. In fact, two sets of talks are currently taking place. Liverpool's chief executive and other officials are discussing the council's budget with senior DOE staff (at the deputy secretary level), and on the political front, Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin visited the city again on Thursday (7 June) to talk with councillors.

The Labour councillors, now ensconsed with a comfortable 17 seat majority following the May elections, are able to continue stalling for two main reasons: the government's connivance and the continued flow of rate money from council tenants. The government is continuing to pay the rate support grant at a rate which assumes the council is spending on target — a ludicrous assumption given that even a standstill budget would mean a penalty of around half the grant.

Secondly, the council is collecting the rates due from council tenants since they pay this with their rent. Approximately 15 per cent of the council's rate income comes from this source. Although this ploy is not actually illegal, the council has no legal basis on which this money is being collected and no sanction could be taken against anyone refusing to pay. And, ironically, it means that tenants are effectively subsidising other ratepayers.

As further evidence of the government's reluctance to force a confrontation at this stage, the DHSS is even paying the council money that would be due, if it had set a rate, from council tenants in receipt of housing benefit, at a level which assumes no change in the rate poundage from last year.

Liverpool City Council has also managed to make its regular monthly payments to Merseyside County Council, whose leader, Keva Coombes, emphasises he is 'backing Liverpool all the way'.

But time is running out for the Labour councillors. The Liberals intend to put their alternative budget at the council meeting on June 20 and the Tories have promised action through the courts in July if they fail to force the district auditor into taking action.

Christian Wolmar

The biggest deterrent

BRITISH scientists will get their first opportunity of hearing about one of the most devastating side-effects of nuclear war — the nuclear winter — at a conference in Sheffield tomorrow (9 June).

Organised by the scientists' anti-nuclear weapons campaign (SANA), the conference will examine the menace of the widespread climatic alteration which a nuclear war could bring about. A nuclear winter would be caused mainly by the large amounts of dust and soot which a major use of nuclear weapons would throw into the atmosphere, preventing sunlight from reaching the earth's surface. Research in the US shows that this is far more than just another inconvenience of a nuclear war. The effects could be severe enough to destroy crops and kill animals, including humans.

The science to describe how a large release of dust and soot into the atmosphere would affect ground temperatures is still being developed. But nuclear winter is now an established research field, mainly because of the work of five US scientists, collectively called TTAPS.

The TTAPS group's findings, published in December, are stark. A 10,000 megatonne nuclear war, for example, can cause near-dark at the Earth's surface for over a month. A 5000MT nuclear war would have severe effects upon plant photosynthesis, for which light is essential. In terms of temperature, the larger war could plunge interior areas of the northern hemisphere below -40°C for two months. Even much smaller nuclear exchanges could involve lengthy periods of freezing.

Moving to the Southern Hemisphere offers no certain escape. A group of biologists who have analysed the effects of the TTAPS results on living creatures conclude that even a 'small' nuclear war involving mainly attacks on cities could have severe effects upon both plants and animals — 'the possibility of the extinction of *Homo Sapiens* cannot be excluded', they conclude.

The message is that 'the winner of a nuclear war only wins for about two weeks' as biologist Stephen Schneider puts it. Then climatic chaos takes over.

Nuclear winter effects can become severe with an exchange of only about 10 per cent of the superpowers' present arsenal of strategic weapons. According to Owen Greene of the Open University, two of the arms reduction schemes now proposed, 'builddown' and 'deep cut', would need until the early decades of the next century to bring down arsenals to below this level.

One sign that nuclear winter arguments are getting somewhere is that they have been widely reported in the USSR where research into its effects is being carried out. Another is that the nuclear winter idea has been vigorously rejected by the civil defence industry. *Practical Civil Defence*, a magazine whose publishers might as well give up the ghost if TTAPS is right, claims that the whole things has been got up 'to demoralise the West'.

Martin Ince

Updates

Noor blunder

Wandsworth prison authorities have categorically denied that black prisoner Cirus Noor has been certified. They say that the Home Office Prison Department's statement that he had been certified on 25 April was a 'misunderstanding' (see *NS* 18 May).

According to Noor's solicitor, Brian Raymond, prison doctors recommended that Noor be transferred to a hospital. Such a recommendation has to be approved by the Home Secretary before it becomes effective. This has not yet happened. Raymond has received a written apology from the Home Office for the obstruction of information and Noor will be examined by an independent psychiatrist this week.

Council counselled

Labour-controlled Gwent County Council has backed down in its dispute with the 350 lecturers in its colleges of further education (*NS* 1 June). It has withdrawn the notices demanding extra hours in the classroom but has warned this may mean 'inevitable job losses'. Education chair Graham Powell refused to comment on why the council has changed its mind but the behind-the-scenes pressure from the local Labour Party had been intense.

Tenants evicted to prevent 'right to buy'

THE GOVERNMENT'S passion for the 'right to buy' for tenants is not being shared by several Tory-controlled county councils on whom it is about to be inflicted. Several have issued eviction notices to their tenants in an effort to prevent them getting the right to buy and many tenants may find themselves homeless as a result.

The Housing and Building Control Bill, currently snagged up in the House of Lords following a couple of government defeats on sales of homes specially adapted for the elderly and the disabled, gives county council tenants the same right to security of tenure and to buy as tenants of district councils have had since 1980. Although county councils are providers of housing to meet general needs, they have accumulated a sizeable stock over the years, including police houses (many of which no longer have police living in them) and staff houses for teachers and social workers.

Many of the tenants were originally offered accommodation temporarily to help them take up jobs with the councils, but have stayed on for many years.

In some cases, the councils have issued the eviction notices in a genuine effort to preserve these houses for future generations of new staff.

But others are simply interested in avoiding the discounts. Dorset County Council is terminating all tenancies which commenced after March last year but is offering the houses on sale *without a discount* to some of the tenants.

What is less clear is the future for those who cannot afford, or do not want, to buy. In its letter to tenants, Surrey County Council 'realises that this will probably cause inconvenience, at the very least'. In Hertfordshire, some tenants have been offered inferior alternative accommodation, presumably so that the council can sell the best. Other counties have warned district councils that they may be receiving applications for accommodation under the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

But harsh interpretations of the 1977 Act, and the fact that most single people do not qualify for help, may mean that some people are left without a home

Shelter, which has been monitoring the counties' actions, has appealed for ministers to intervene to ensure that no hardship befalls tenants. But in response to a Parliamentary Question, housing minister Ian Gow said that 'the decisions are for them (the councils) to take under the law as it stands' although he went on to describe the actions as 'indefensible'.

Steve Hilditch

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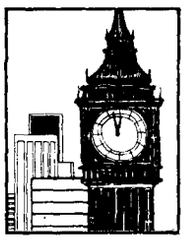

PETER KELLNER Political Editor

The campaign when Michael rowed the boat aground

A year after Labour's disastrous defeat at the polls, Peter Kellner looks at the range of books offering explanations and concludes that Michael Foot missed the point

ONE YEAR AGO this week, at his eve-of-poll meeting in Ebbw Vale, Michael Foot whistled passionately in the dark:

> We've had magnificent meetings, bigger meetings I would say than we've had in the last few general elections . . . We have been making tens of thousands of new members up and down the country . . . I calculate I have been to something like 76 of the marginal constituencies. Most of them tell me the same story — they can't understand what the polls are saying.

Most politicians would quietly bury such words. Foot does not. He reprints them in his account of last year's election campaign, *Another Heart and Other Pulses*[1]. In fact he reprints the whole of his Ebbw Vale speech: it occupies pages 130 to 146 of his book. What the book lacks in original information it makes up for in documentary material.

Apart from four appendices, including a transcript of Foot's *Panorama* interview with Sir Robin Day, the book contains the texts of: correspondence in *The Times* on opinion polls (pages 15-19), the *Guardian*'s account of Foot's Glasgow rally at the beginning of the campaign (39-40), extracts from Foot's speech in Cardiff (48-50), press assessments of the first week of the campaign (52-54), Foot's statement squaring his and Denis Healey's views on nuclear disarmament (76-78), Norman Mailer's views on Foot (94-95), right-wing newspapers' accounts of changes in Labour's campaign tactics (100-103), and Enoch Powell's views on nuclear weapons (107-110).

Nowhere, however, does Foot explain the discrepancy set out in his Ebbw Vale speech, and magnified by the actual result. Rather, Foot deflects the point by observing with hindsight that by polling day 'all our regional organizers knew what we were facing, even if the full appreciation was yet to come. They too had had to keep their feelings to themselves . . . The astonishing contrast between the fighting spirit of Labour's rank-and-file and the collapse of support among potential Labour voters persisted to the end'.

The nearest Foot comes to an analysis of Labour's defeat is when he describes how the party lost support in two stages — in the two years leading up to the campaign, and during the campaign itself. Foot concludes: 'Labour was vulnerable to the combined attack from the Conservative machine, the Alliance challenge, the assault in the media, the pollsters off the leash. We had not the armour, the strength, the quickness in manoeuvre, yes, the leadership, to ward off the attack and to launch the counter-attack'.

Foot's military metaphor gives the impression of an honourable general returning from a battlefield saying: 'We lost. The enemy was too strong. The responsibility for defeat is mine and I accept the consequences. Adjutant, where is my pistol?' As a genuflexion to traditions of chivalry, Foot's *mea culpa* cannot be faulted. As an analysis of past mistakes and a guide to future action it leaves almost everything to be desired.

A YEAR AFTER the deluge we can, and ought to, put the defeat into a fuller perspective. Foot's book does not help us much, so we must look elsewhere. In the past few weeks a number of books have provided insights into the scale of Labour's defeat and the nature of Mrs Thatcher's victory.

As always, the most sobering corrective to the myths that surround any general election is provided by the Nuffield study, written for the fourth time by David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh[2]. It includes a critical chapter on broadcasting, arguing that the broadcasters failed to penetrate Tory weaknesses on policy as vigorously as they penetrated Labour weaknesses. Curiously, Foot's book contains no assessment at all of how television treated the election, even though television is manifestly more important than newspapers as a source of election news.

London Express Service

Michael Foot prepares to charge Mrs Thatcher

(Presumably this is because Foot, like most active campaigners, barely watched any television himself during the campaign, and so failed to see the election as most voters saw it. Austin Mitchell pointed out the bizarre relationship between candidates and the telly when he described — on television — how he had been spurned on a number of doorsteps by electors who were watching the campaign on the box when he called, and who didn't want their election viewing to be interrupted. For them the election was what was shown on the television, not what happened at the front door, even less what happened at public meetings.)

The analysis of the results by John Curtice and Michael Steed at the back of the Butler/Kavanagh book is, as usual, vital reading for anyone who takes electoral arithmetic seriously. But as a source of raw data they now have a rival. Ivor Crewe and Anthony Fox[3] have compiled as comprehensive a guide to the political and social characteristics of each constituency as anyone could wish for, together with 50 league tables of constituencies telling you, for example, where the greatest concentration of immigrant families is to be found (Brent South), or which seat has the lowest unemployment (Wokingham).

The book's strength is the same as its weakness: it provides data mechanically, untouched by human prejudice. If you turn to page 377, you will discover that the highest two-party Labour-Conservative swing to the Tories, 19.9 per cent, took place in Yeovil. If you turn to page 354, you discover that Yeovil was won by the Liberals.

For an understanding of public opinion at the time of the election campaign, the best guide is provided by the first of what is intended as an annual series of studies on British social attitudes[4]. Fieldwork for the first book was conducted in March and April last year, shortly before the election campaign. Among its clearest findings — confirmed by last month's *Observer*/Harris poll — is that there is no great public support for Mrs Thatcher's prescription for solving Britain's problems. Eighty-nine per cent support extra government spending on construction projects as a way of creating more jobs; 85 per cent reject the notion that cutting spending on health and education would help the economy. ▷

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Yet, beyond that, the Tories mounted an effective campaign, successfully defending most of the gain in public support they achieved at the time of the Falklands war. Two very different books show how the Conservatives massaged Mrs Thatcher's image and manipulated the media during the campaign. One, by Bruce Arnold, contends that the Prime Minister has no coherent political principles at all — not even clearly thought-out right-wing ones — and that hers has been a career devoted to the pursuit of power for its own sake[5].

The other book, by one BBC and two *Times* reporters, does not explicitly reach the same conclusion, but their dissection of the lobby system and of Mrs Thatcher's cynical (or merely professional?) use of the media does not suggest any alternative hypothesis[6]. Acording to the authors, 'Mrs Thatcher's 1983 campaign was not designed to inform the electorate. Rather it was like a high-class magic show, with skilful patter aimed at diverting the audience's attention from what was really going on.'

UNFORTUNATELY, the Left can do little between now and the next general election to correct the right-wing bias of Fleet Street or to prevent Conservative Central Office from indulging in more skilful patter and high-class magic. In any case, 'we wuz robbed' provides at best an alibi for only a fraction of Labour's electoral haemorrhage last June. To look at the problems Labour can solve, we must first go back to the two stages of the party's defeat outlined, but not explained, by Michael Foot.

The most dramatic component of the debacle was the decline in Labour's support during the last fortnight of the campaign. During the first half, Labour's support held steady at around 34 per cent. Then, during the second half, it fell by six points to 28 per cent. Labour started the campaign with almost twice as much support as the Liberal/SDP Alliance: at the end it was a scramble for second place.

Perhaps the most damaging consequence of Labour's disastrous campaign is the extent to which it no longer appears to be the main challenger to the Conservatives in the great majority of Tory seats. Alliance candidates came second to the Tories in 265 constituencies, Labour in only 125. To win next time, Labour must either win almost every seat where it came second last year, or leap from third to first place in a fair number of places.

By-elections, such as next week's in Portsmouth South, have become significant because of Labour's need to re-establish itself not just as the main challenger to the Conservatives nationally, but also at local level. (Last June the SDP beat Labour into third place in Portsmouth South by 1,400 votes.) Should Labour fail, as in Stafford last month, to reclaim second place, it could find itself unable to overcome tactical decisions by anti-Tory electors to vote in still greater numbers for the Alliance next time. If that happens, Labour cannot win.

How different the prospects would look today had Labour's support held up during that final fortnight last June. It is likely that the Alliance would still have gained some ground, as the Liberals have in past elections. My own rough guess of the result, had Labour not scored so many own goals, is: Conservative 42 per cent, Labour 33, Liberal/SDP 22. The Conservatives would still have won, of course, although with an overall majority of 56 instead of 144. The likely result in seats would have been: Conservatives 363 (down 34 compared with its actual total), Labour 249 (up 40), Lib/SDP 17 (down 6).

From that baseline, a recovery to 326 — the number needed for an overall Commons majority — would look less daunting. Seventy-seven seats is, to be sure, a lot of seats to win (especially as, as Curtice and Steed show, fewer seats now change hands on any given swing than at any time since the war). But Labour would have come second to the Tories in 168 seats. In other words, Labour would need to win in only (!) half the seats where it is the clear challenger to the Tories: for all practical purposes it need not worry about winning in any seat where it was third. Labour's credibility problem today as the challenger to the Tories in something like 80 seats derives precisely from the nightmare of that terrible last campaign fortnight.

What went wrong? Foot blames Fleet Street, the Tories, the polls, James Callaghan and to some extent himself — although he fails to define any particular mistake he made and seems to regard the party's national organisation as quite blameless. For example, he makes no reference to one of Labour's more spectacular own goals: the remark by General Secretary Jim Mortimer that 'the unanimous view of the Campaign Committee is that Michael Foot is the leader of the Labour Party' — a comment far more likely to raise doubts than to quell them. On this, as on other embarrassing events, the reader must turn to the reporting of Butler and Kavanagh, rather than the memories of the party leader.

IN TRUTH, Labour's decline in the final fortnight of the campaign is easy to explain. Blame cannot be put at the door of Fleet Street, the Tories or the polls: they acted in much the same way throughout the campaign — when Labour's support was holding up, as well as when it was sliding. The new factors that made the difference were almost wholly of Labour's own making: the shambles of the party's campaign committee, a defence policy that fell apart under scrutiny, James Callaghan's intervention on nuclear disarmament, Jim Mortimer's gaffe, Denis Healey's Falklands outburst, and, above all, Labour's failure as the campaign progressed to persuade voters that it could deliver the economic recovery it promised. None of these self-inflicted wounds was necessary or inevitable; and with luck — or, rather, with judgment and care — similar mistakes can be avoided next time.

However, the mere avoidance of mistakes would not have been enough. Labour's task last June was not simply to maintain its support at 34 per cent, but to raise it to at least 40 per cent. It needed to win back two million votes that the party had previously lost.

That need not have been an impossible objective. As *British Social Attitudes* shows, there was widespread support at the time for price controls, import controls, and extra government spending to create jobs — all part of Labour's manifesto. There was also widespread opposition to the siting of American cruise missiles in Britain. But in two major areas Labour was running against the grain of public opinion. By a two-to-one majority, the public agreed with the view that Britain's possession of its own nuclear weapons makes the country a safer place to live; most Labour 'partisans' — people keen to see a majority Labour government — shared this view.

The second area concerned the country's institutions. In its manifesto Labour promised — or, depending how you view these things, threatened — greater controls over the banks and the police, and wished to extend the powers of the trade unions and nationalised industries. In one of the sets of questions in *British Social Attitudes*, respondents were asked what they thought of each of 12 institutions — are they well run, or are they badly run. Which two came top — and which two came bottom? You've guessed.

There are two ways of viewing such findings. Either the party changes its policies, or it has to find ways of winning voters to the cause of socialism before the election campaign begins; or both. Between 1979 and 1983 the party did neither. To some extent this was because of the internal feuding and constitutional rows. But even without the distractions caused by the SDP defectors, the supporters of Tony Benn and the malevolence of Militant, Labour would have had difficulty convincing wavering voters that the party could solve Britain's problems. It could have convinced few outsiders because, with the possible exception of those people who cheered Michael Foot at his rallies, it failed to convince its own loyalists.

I know many people who enthused over bits of Labour's manifesto. I know hardly anyone who enthused over it all, or felt that it offered a coherent and plausible strategy. The party could not command the faith of others when it did not believe in itself. That fundamentally is why Labour lost. □

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LAW

Trials of the dopes

Can reading drive you mad? Andrew Tyler reports on the obscene comics' judgment

THE ACQUITTAL of Tony Bennett of Knockabout Comics at the Old Bailey last week marks a significant failure to widen the obscenity laws to cover drug books.

Bennet was charged under Section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act with trading in 10 titles that tended to deprave and corrupt. The prosecution mounted the hawkish Professor Griffith Edwards of the Institute of Psychiatry's Addiction Research Unit. The defence countered with Professor I.D.P. Graham — a Cardiff pharmacologist who admitted having sampled a variety of illicit drugs — and the dapper psychiatrist Dr. T.H. Bewley who covered the middle ground.

All three are pillars of the addiction research industry, having served on the Home Office Council on the Misuse of Drugs. And each had their sometimes markedly different views on such questions as whether or not cannabis accumulated psychoactively in the body and whether cocaine produced an 'addiction' or merely a 'compulsive craving'.

As they extracted from this report and that, an air of unreality settled over court number three. Was this expensive exercise really anything to do with the nation's mounting drugs crisis — viz estate loads of scag and glue kids? And why, at this moment, launch a symposium on the merits or otherwise of three relatively benign drugs — namely psilocybin mushrooms, cocaine and cannabis, the subject matter of the books in question?

In the pre-trial application the prosecutor, Michael Worsley, set the tone perfectly. He referred to Bennett's business as 'weird', 'peculiar' and 'small'. In fact the defence was able to point out that Bennett supplied shops throughout the country, including Dillons and Foyles. Some of the titles at issue, they said, had been on sale for ten years.

Worsley persisted in trying to put a gap between Bennett and all decent family folk with a reference to sodomist sailors and by asking 'whether Mr Bennett, when his children get to their middle teens, will be giving them books on how to grow marijuana under lights . . . or on that most dangerous drug, cocaine . . .' It was a tactic that seemed to fail. For, look as they might, the jury could detect no malice in Bennett's face.

Worsley also failed to set Professor Edwards above the slightly lower-ranked defence experts: 'When you compare Professor Edwards with the others you might think he towered above them as a man of science and of care'. In fact Edwards possibly irritated the jury with his ambivalence, his fussiness over terminology and they might even have disliked his tendency to put before them the most dreadful consequences claimed for marijuana use — paranoia, birth abnormalities, cancer — without actually endorsing or rejecting any of it.

The job of the jury, explained Judge Lewisohn, was to determine whether the more extreme mental and physical effects, as outlined by the experts, constituted depravity and corruption. If they did, would Bennett's books cause a 'significant proportion' of those who read them and, as a result, acquired and consumed the forbidden substances, to end up in such a condition? Tendentious stuff. The jury fixed on the titles in question, refused to be numbed by the great import of the trial, and rejected the prosecution's claims.

THERE IS still no clear answer as to what specifically triggered the prosecution. Teddy Taylor, the go-getting Conservative MP for Southend East who is close to Thatcher's heart, is sometimes cited as the architect. He launched a media campaign against drug paraphernalia while MP for Glasgow. He also wrote to the Home Office, urging action.

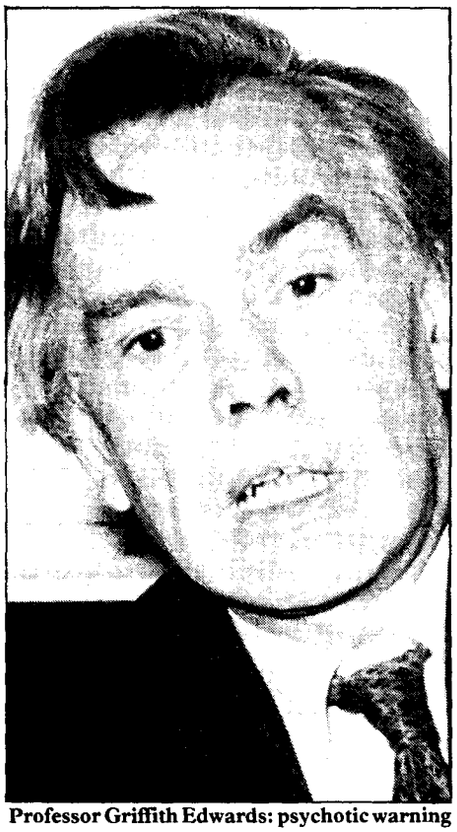
Another theory is that it originated with the police. They were said to be anxious about the volume of American drug literature entering the country. Alternatively, Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications branch were bored with routine depravity. An early mover against drugs books, Manchester's Chief Constable James Anderton, has been going to the limits of the existing law to 'clean up' immoral publications.

But it is possible that pressure for an authoritative resolution came from tensions within the different strands of the medical profession. Divisions over how to characterise mental illness and what causes it, and how and by whom drug abuse should be treated remain acute, reflecting profound ideological and occupational conflicts.

These tensions were dramatised at the Old Bailey. Professor Edwards described a severe cannabis related psychosis that, he said, could linger for two or three weeks. On the other hand, Professor Graham preferred to associate the drug with 'friendship and goodwill.' He has advocated in a paper to the Home Office that simple possession no longer be a criminal offence.

Edwards illustrated his grimmer verdict with a survey carried out in South Africa in 1982. Known as the Rottanburg Report, it described the progress of '20 acute admissions' to a Cape Town mental hospital who showed cannibinoid traces in their urine. The purpose of the study had been to determine the existence of this much-debated cannabis associated psychosis.

But while the paper seemed to establish nothing to the satisfaction of the defence experts, what it did for the jury was launch the spectre of young black males wild on dope. (There are suggestions in drug agency circles that similar studies are now being conducted on South London black people.)



Linda Westmore

Professor Griffith Edwards: psychotic warning

Given that ganja is the preferred 'herb' among British black people, it is feared that attempts to have it re-described in the courts as something mentally hazardous could give a medical blessing to the present high level of street searches. It could also lead to sterner measures by magistrates who are currently awarding fines of about £25 for simple possession.

Says Paul Gilroy of the GLC's Police Support Unit 'At the centre of this is the view that West Indians are "constitutionally disorderly". I don't think it's stretching the point to say cannabis equals subversive. I see it being used increasingly as a formal justification for the powers of search.'

Cannabis possession constitutes nearly 90 per cent of all drugs possession charges with 15,278 of 17,425 being for the herb in 1982. Police find the self-enclosed economic network that sustains cannabis-dealing one of the most threatening qualities of the black community.

The acquittal decision by the Knockabout jury sets the tide against the developments Gilroy fears. But the Crown hasn't yet completed its case against drug-related books. A second Old Bailey trial is pending, also under section 2 of OPA. And nine separate cases are due before magistrates under the lesser section 3 — in Birmingham, Manchester (two), London (two), Birkenhead, Scarborough, Leeds, Bristol and Reading.

Section 3 carries no penalty other than forfeiture. In practice, however, it has meant that many of the shops involved are already financially imperilled because of the amount of stock taken by the police. Some 20,000 books and comics involving 250 titles are still being held. Among them are more belonging to Bennett. □

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MINERS' STRIKE 1

War of attrition . . .

Susan Miller describes the policing strategy during the strike — and the emergency of the 'third force'

HOWEVER the present miners' strike is settled, one consequence of it is not in question: Arthur Scargill and the leadership of the NUM will be answerable to their members for their strategy during the dispute. No such consequence awaits the other side, especially as it is not even clear who its leadership is composed of — the NCB? the government? the police? Who can call any of these bodies to account?

Certainly not Parliament which has played virtually no role as a check on State powers, and certainly none of the representatives of local authority who are formally vested with control of the police. At the Joint Conference between the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), and the Association of County Councils and Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) last week, Douglas Hurd MP, Minister of State at the Home Office, stated that:

> The policing of the miners' dispute has been carried out with great skill and judgement within the framework of our present system. The police have needed no new powers, and no new institutions in order to keep the pits open for those who have decided that they wish to work. The police have relied on the long established principle of mutual aid between forces provided at the request of a chief officer. They have used the existing machinery of the National Reporting Centre to ensure that mutual aid is quick and effective. It is not the principle but the scale of the policing commitment over the last two months which is new.

Hurd went on to say that the Police are accountable only to 'the law' and 'their operations in support of the law are emphatically not under the direction of any Minister or any local authority.'

At the same conference David Hall, current president of ACPO, denied that he, or any other ACPO members, was responsible for the deployment of officers in the policing of the dispute.

Both were arguing the same point: that no national police force exists in this country and that the policing operation has been organised by the existing 'mutal aid' agreements between Police Authorities, with a helping hand, when requested, from ACPO at the National Reporting Centre (NRC) at Scotland Yard. However, if we examine the policing of the dispute more closely, we can see that these statements are quite clearly false.

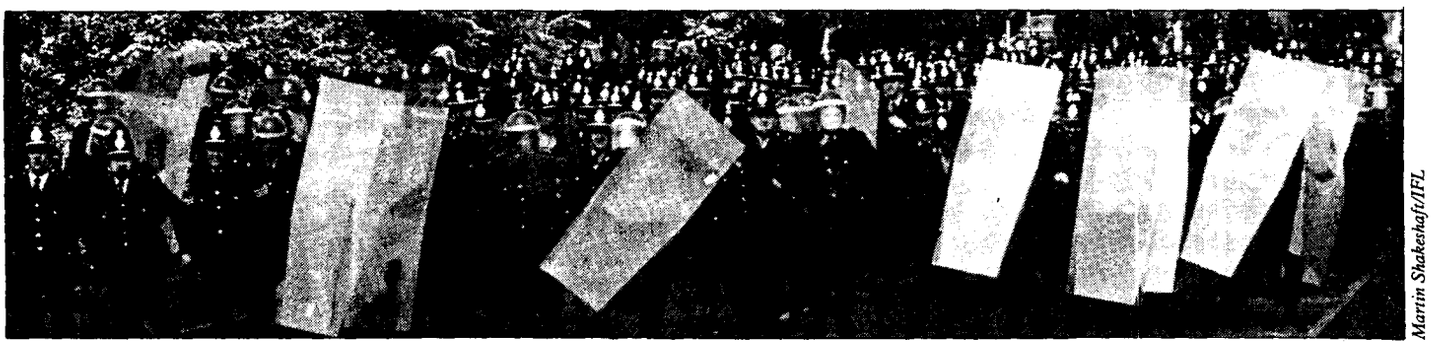
Over a number of years, the limited powers of Police Authorities have been whittled away, not least by the centralisation of various police services. From the conglomerates have emerged a body of senior police officers demanding more resources, more powers, and the front-line role in defining what constitutes 'law and order'. ACPO have played a large part in establishing this role for senior police officers.

It has now become evident that ACPO have been consolidating their increasing powers over a number of years. It has been demonstrated dramatically by their major intervention in the miners' strike. Under the auspices of the National Reporting Centre, they have been responsible for the deployment of officers to police the dispute, without recourse to the County Police Authorities, and without accountability to anyone but the Home Secretary.

The NRC, based at Scotland Yard, was created in 1972 in the wake of the mass picketing at Saltley Gate during the miners' strike. The Special Patrol Group (SPG) had, in fact, already been used against other groups of workers and in 1973 an anti-picket squad was set up, operating from Scotland Yard. Information was to be passed on to highly mobile para-military units (then the SPG) who could move swiftly to 'control' industrial conflicts. During the late 1960's and early 1970's the number of these special police support units increased. It has been estimated that the national 'third force' is as large as 11,000 officers' strong.

David Hall is, as President of ACPO, the current controller of the NRC. He claimed that within 3¼ hours of the picketing beginning in Nottinghamshire 1,000 officers had been mobilized from different areas. Within a few days, after consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies (HMI), *all but two* of the Constabularies in the country had been involved in the dispute, with 8,000 officers deployed in the special units. Hall claims that he did not deploy officers unless he had received a specific request from a Chief Constable. In fact, it appears that the legal and policing strategy to be used during the dispute was planned well in advance at a meeting which took place in February between the Home Secretary, the Attorney General and all Chief Constables.

PERHAPS IT was at this meeting — after the experience of the NGA pickets — that the legal strategy was decided. This was to use the criminal law in preference to the civil law in the shape of the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts. There are many reasons for this decision, but the government would certainly have feared that the use of the employment legislation would unite other unions with the NUM in a clear-cut political battle against Conservative anti-trade union policies. Also, the civil law is more rigid in its targets; it is directed against the leaders of the union and not the rank and file; the NUM, consisting as it does of many separate regional associations with their own separate funds, was less vulnerable than the centralised NGA to the rapid and effective sequestration of funds. By choosing to use the criminal law, the government has avoided institutional martyrs and given thousands of ordinary miners a criminal record.



Martin Shakeshaft/IFL

'Riot police' charge the pickets at Orgreave coking plant. Who needs the army?

The police have acted well beyond their existing powers with complete confidence that courts, Ministers and Parliament will back them.

During the preparation of a Report to the Yorkshire Area of the NUM, Martin Walker and I discovered that

- Very few of the men had actually committed any offence.
- Most of the arrests were either simply illegal or contravened the Judges' Rule (e.g. failure to caution arrested persons; use of threats and intimidation).
- Special Branch officers have been employed to gather information on political and personal matters.
- There has been wide-scale phone tapping.
- The police have been using counter-insurgency methods such as snatch squads.
- The police have been using powers not granted in statute or precedent, including the blocking off of the Dartford Tunnel and the arbitrary turning back of pickets and others from the Nottinghamshire border.
- Magistrates have complied with the police in treating miners as criminals, giving them bail conditions without properly examining the

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circumstances of their arrest. Some of these conditions amount to house arrest, as at Mansfield recently where miners were placed under a curfew and had to report to a police station daily.

This strategy has three consequences; miners are put outside the law within their own organisations and in the eyes of society at large; the numbers available for picketing have been reduced and police have been able to gather intelligence on activists for use in the future.

When scenes of mass violence erupted onto television screens last week we were not seeing any change in police strategy. Once the decision had been made to commit whatever resources were necessary to prevent the pickets winning, at whatever cost to civil liberties or 'law and order', any increase in miners' anger or activity would draw an escalation of police action. The government itself, with ACPO as its generals, would be more than happy to win a decisive 'military' victory over the miners. Interestingly, the note of caution about this strategy, and the pressure to resort to the less violent civil law, has come from the Police Federation, the organisation of the 'ranks'.

Of course the State has used force before to defeat a trade union challenge. Up until the 1930s the army was often encamped in mining areas to prevent outbreaks of 'disorder'. Now such a use of the army would not so much be unacceptable — and there are a number of reports of troops being used in police uniforms — as unnecessary. In effect a national 'third force' of highly mobile, riot trained police, backed by Special Branch intelligence operations, has been created. This is just the first time we have seen it in action. □

Details of the police operation in the first six weeks of the strike are in A State of Siege *by Susan Miller and Martin Walker, a report to the Yorkshire Area NUM. Available from the union at Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, £2 plus p&p.*

MINERS' STRIKE 2

... or manoeuvre

Now that the right-wing leadership in the NUM is silent, Mick Johnson asks if the CP will provide a new Left lead

THE ISSUE of the use of force has always woven its way in and out of Left debate receiving legitimation from some quarters as it did so. In recent years the Left has focused sharply on the nature of violence offered by the greater power; as for example the US in the case of Vietnam or the British military force and Royal Ulster Constabulary in the case of Northern Ireland. The greater resources, firepower, technology and intelligence available to these forces overlaid events with the symbol of David and Goliath, extending the Left's point of view to a general context.

The National Union of Mineworkers' leadership has reanimated that overlay as a means of gaining support for its struggle against pit closures and redundancies. Arthur Scargill, the NUM president, has constantly stressed the presence of huge concentrations of police in the Nottinghamshire and other coalfields, has placed *all* the responsibility for picket line violence on the shoulders of the police and has in practice insisted — in spite of rhetorical calls to other unions for assistance — that the NUM alone conducts and controls the strike.

Attention has been narrowed to the personal character and dynamism of the NUM president (and the neatly counterposed character of Ian MacGregor the National Coal Board chairman) and to the scenes on the picket lines. In part this reflects the priorities of television and the popular press; the hunger for action footage and drama, the use of strong one-dimensional characters to carry an otherwise complex story. But it is also a reasonable reading of essential characteristics of the miners' strike: the huge importance of the charismatic powers of Arthur Scargill and his ability to galvanise and inspire thousands of — mainly young — militant mineworkers coupled with the reliance of the NUM on mass picketing to achieve its ends.

Mass picketing worked for Scargill before. At Saltley coke depot in 1972, 20,000 miners and other workers organised by Scargill blockaded the gates. The sheer force of numbers convinced the senior police officers at the scene that attempts to move the coke were doomed: the plant was closed and its management later agreed a quota system for deliveries with the NUM. It was both an industrial and a political coup and its demonstrated to Scargill, as he has often said since, that mass picketing can be peaceful.

That is true where the pickets achieve their objects. Where the police counter pickets by refusing to allow them to blockade a plant or a pit, tension and then violence is always likely to erupt. In the narrow frame of any given picket line (and it is in that narrow frame that TV images are constructed) police enforce the law against the determination of groups of mineworkers to break it: two groups of tough men struggle for supremacy over strips of road leading into work.

THE UNIQUE twist in this dispute has been that the police action has been mounted on behalf of (among other more influential parties) miners and steelworkers who want to go to work or who want regular supplies of coke. Anti-strike Notts miners have praised the police and are now leaving the Labour Party. They are also throwing pro-strike officials out of office.

At Ravenscraig, the steelworkers went so far as to demand that the British Steel Corporation management use the Employment Acts to guarantee supplies of coke (after, ironically, BSC had been told by government not to use the Acts). Both the image and the reality of worker against worker have been given to the government on a plate: the wider issues of energy policy, unemployment in the coalfields, the abandonment of the Plan for Coal have been aired but in a minor key.

These points have not eluded the NUM leadership: the constellation of political forces upon them, however, has been such that only in the last two weeks has it become obvious that a change of tactics is being considered. The Labour Party's evident discomfort with the strike, its anxiety for talks and its distaste for violence has exercised some pressure on the NUM leadership — but that has been overstressed, most of all by Labour Party leaders. The NUM's right wing, led by men like Trevor Bell, Jack Jones and Roy Ottey, are the ones most sensitive to Labour's image and electoral considerations and their purchase on union policy is now very light indeed.

The Communist Party, with only toehold representation on the executive now, but with powerful influence, is nearer the heart of practical choice. Mick McGahey the union's vice-president has never actually exercised the avuncular 'grey eminence' role credited to him after Scargill's presidential victory two years ago — until now. The CP's line has quietly changed from unqualified support for a strike that could last until Christmas or beyond, to a position of 'victory as soon as possible' – a call made last week by Gordon McLennan, the party's general secretary, at a party rally for the miners. Unravelled, that line can only mean a negotiated settlement with the best possible interpretation put on the outcome of talks between the union and the NCB.

After several years in which the CP's industrial line was an uneasy mix of syndicalism and permeating the trade union leadership it has, under the new appointment of Eurocommunist Pete Carter as industrial organiser, been edged around and integrated into mainline CP strategy. Where once the miners' action would have been hallowed as the independent 'vanguard' of political change, regardless of a committment to the 'democratic road', now, as Pete Carter reported to the last meeting of the CP's Executive Committee, the Left has to accept that the government cannot be thrown out of office by an industrial coup.

Late in the day, the union has organised a lobby of parliament and a march through London by miners and their families — a dramatisation of the increasing immiseration of miners after more than three months of strike without strike pay and on reduced benefits. This lobby too is a CP initiative, a linking of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity.

Scargill has gone along with this: indeed he has spoken enthusiastically of the talks as yielding a favourable outcome — too enthusiastically given the huge distance between the two sides. Whether he can accept a negotiated deal falling far short of his demands is questionable: his instincts, unlike some of his colleagues on the Left, could lead him to reject compromise in favour of further attempts to deepen and extend the strike.

Scargill's extraordinary will and determination remain the key factor — unless McGahey, Peter Heathfield, the general secretary, and others on the Left wish and feel able to erect a distinct position in opposition to the President. They would only do so if, in extremity, they judged that a negotiated deal would do less

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damage to, or win more for, the union that the war of attrition until absolute victory favoured by Scargill. That choice is dimly visible through the cloud of detail with which the the talks must be concerned. If made, it will be momentous.

The other possibilities are that the Left continues to agree to carry on with the strike: or that it agrees to accept a deal, however unwillingly. These are no less momentous. The nature of this strike and the nature of the challenge posed by Scargill to trade unionism and the Left at least as much as to the government and the NCB have been such that *any* settlement will change the industrial landscape. □

Vulgar passions

Mary Holland looks at what Northern Irish leaders hope to get on 14 June

IN AN AFTER dinner speech at the climax of his Irish visit, Ronald Reagan used a sophisticated aphorism of Oscar Wilde's about war to condemn terrorism. 'When it is looked upon as vulgar', he said, 'it will cease to be popular.' It seemed a curious way to appeal to the ghetto Catholics of Belfast and Derry to abandon the IRA.

Mr Reagan is the latest in a procession of world leaders who have come to Ireland and urged those who support violence in the North to mend their ways. His pleas will have as little effect as those of Pope John Paul, Speaker 'Tip' O'Neill or the line of Catholic bishops who have begged Northern Catholics to withdraw their support from 'men of violence'. On the contrary; in recent weeks the IRA has demonstrated that its lethal allegiance to the bomb and the bullet is as resolute as ever, yet this has in no way affected the support among Catholics in the North for Sinn Fein.

MADAME BLAVATSKY

Why were, and are, so many people, by way of books and articles, so concerned to besmirch her reputation, to prove her a fraud, and to denigrate her works? Is it because they are afraid? Does what she had to say undermine the "authority" of our highest institutions? Is "orthodoxy" fearful of the searchlight of her encyclopaedic knowledge and powerful intellect? Is it that academic vested interest must discredit her to maintain its own position? You can only find this out by reading her works for yourself. We suggest you would never be sorry if you did!

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In the drab 'portakabin' which serves as election headquarters cum busy advice centre for the party in the savagely deprived Creggan estate in Derry, there is an election poster urging people to 'Vote for the Man the Brits Fear'. It was produced in the election to Mr Prior's assembly in 1982 and shows the local Provisional leader, Martin McGuinness, who won his seat on the strength of this appeal. It will probably be joined by a poster showing Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein's candidate in the EEC elections, appealing for votes for the man the President of the United States has described as 'vulgar'. It is an epithet which will do him no harm at all with Northern Catholics.

If Sinn Fein's presence on the ground were anything to go by, Morrison would almost walk his way into the EEC parliament on 14 June. In marked contrast to the almost invisible SDLP, the party's workers are everywhere, working on election registers, putting up posters, checking and rechecking streets of voters. Mr Morrison himself says that he won't win the seat but that he is hopeful of winning a majority of first preference votes from Nationalist voters. This would mean that John Hume, SDLP member and sitting MEP, would get elected on transfers from other parties and might have to wait for several counts.

Privately, Sinn Fein organisers think that Morrison has pitched his public claims a bit high. They will be well content if they push the 103,000 votes which the party gained in the British general election up to about 120,000. To date the received wisdom about Sinn Fein is that it has not damaged the SDLP's vote, but merely mobilised a traditional Republican vote which rarely bothers to go to the polls and has also attracted the new young voters. If the party can demonstrate a capacity to eat into the SDLP's traditional Nationalist support at this election it will give momentum to their real attack on the party, which will come at the local government elections next year.

However he fares at the polls, Mr Morrison's candidacy already dominates this European election in Northern Ireland. John Hume would like to be judged on his record as an MEP of attracting EEC money and political attention to Ireland. At the press conference launching his campaign he did not refer to the New Ireland Forum, of which he was the chief architect, though most people had expected it to be central to his programme. The cynical interpretation of this is that Mr Hume hopes to attract Protestant votes (or at least the transfers of Protestants alarmed at the prospect of a Sinn Fein victory) and that the Forum is not popular with Protestants.

Already the leadership of the Official Unionist Party has given signals to its own supporters that they should consider giving transfers to the SDLP, but from past evidence there is little sign that this will happen. A study of recent voting patterns by Dr Sidney Elliott of Queens University shows that in the 1982 elections, when PR last operated, there were virtually no transfers across the sectarian divide, at least where the major Unionist and Nationalist parties were concerned. Ironically, Hume's best hope of getting transfers is from Sinn Fein voters. In the 1982 election 50.2 per cent of Sinn Fein voters gave their transfers to the SDLP, while only 18 per cent of the SDLP's own supporters returned the favour.

The battle for the hearts and minds of the Catholic community has inevitably dominated media interest outside Ireland given official alarm about Sinn Fein. But the contest on the Unionist side is at least as significant for the future political direction of the province. In the 1979 EEC election they Rev Ian Paisley topped the poll with over 170,000 votes, establishing his claim to be heard as the leader of Northern Ireland's Protestant people. But since then his Democratic Unionists' share of the vote has declined from 26.6 per cent of the vote in 1981 to 20 per cent in 1983. If the Official Unionists can continue to eat into Paisley's vote it will be a considerable boost for James Prior, whose hopes of progress in the province are based on the possibility of the Official Unionists reaching a workable compromise with the SDLP. Here the pattern of transfers is predictable. In 1982, 76 per cent of Official Unionist voters transferred to the DUP and 80 per cent of Dr Paisley's supporters gave their transfers to the Official Unionists.

Dr Paisley is taking no chances that a rash of moderation among Unionists might erode his massive personal vote. Although his record as an MEP is every bit as impressive as John Hume's he has made it clear that this election is about the old issue of the border. In particular he wants a huge Protestant vote to demonstrate defiance of closer co-operation between the Dublin and London governments. He has some rather questionable allies in putting this message across. Canvassing in the Shankill last week he was accompanied by George Seawright, a local assembly representative. Mr Seawright has been in the news recently for remarks he is reported to have made at a meeting of the Belfast Education and Library Board during a discussion about Catholics objecting to the playing of the British national anthem at school concerts. Mr Seawright referred to the Catholics involved as 'Fenian scum' and suggested that 'taxpayers' money would be better spent on an incinerator and burning the lot of them.' Priests, he said, should be thrown in and burnt as well. Plus ça change . . . □

THIS ENGLAND

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□The model should be the British Tory party, from which there was so much to learn, and how marvellous it could be if the age of the English nanny could return to Argentina in the shape of Mrs Thatcher. — Peregrine Worsthorne in the *Sunday Telegraph* (A R Baigent)

□British Gas is living up to its advertising slogan. A 'high speed' delivery to a Teignmouth address advising that an engineer would call to fit a new meter was returned by the Post Office marked 'house not built yet'. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

□Police should not be allowed to use plastic bullets to control rioting crowds — they should use live ammunition, according to North Cornwall district councillor, Mr Bill Lyne. He made the comment during a council debate on the use by police of plastic bullets and baton rounds. Councillors were asked to oppose the stockpiling of such weaponry in their districts. — *Western Morning News* (A. F. Dennis)

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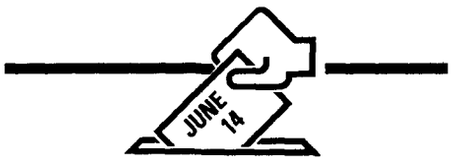

Lobbyists at work

Hugh Stephenson tells a story about Strasbourg

NEXT THURSDAY, barring accidents, Mr Amédée Turner QC will be re-elected to the European Parliament as the Conservative Member for Suffolk and Southeast Cambridge. He has been an MEP since 1979. In Strasbourg circles at least, he has made something of a reputation for himself from his base as vice-chairman of the Euro-Parliament's legal committee.

For example, in 1982 he was the subject of demands for a parliamentary inquiry about his business links. The Bar Council in London was also asked whether these links constituted a breach of a lawyer's professional code of conduct. For Mr Turner had been retained in 1981 by a firm of London solicitors, Lovell, White and King, to act as a consultant to the Mars Group — makers of Mars Bars and sponsors of London marathons.

Nothing wrong in that, one might think. A QC must earn his crust. But the point was that Mr Turner was not being retained as a QC. A confidential letter from the solicitors to Mars Limited, dated 26 May 1981 and signed John Kitching, makes the position clear. 'I saw Mr Turner this morning with a view to his assisting the Mars Group on a consultancy basis with regard to European political matters. . . I made it clear that we were looking for his assistance as an MEP rather than as a lawyer and he accepted this. He saw his role as feeding us with relevant information on matters which concern Mars and also advising, when asked on the best political approach — i.e. which lines of argument were likely to win support and be successful and which should be toned down.'

On the face of it, an MP who entered into such an arrangement would almost certainly be in breach of the Bar Council's Code of Conduct. It lays down that MPs who are barristers must not accept rewards for what they do in their capacity as Members.

In the event the Bar Council did nothing because its Professional Conduct Committee decided that there was no specific rule covering the position of barristers who are also MEPs; and that no impropriety was involved. But the episode reveals the tip of the iceberg of Euro-lobbying by big business in general and multinational corporations in particular.

For multinational corporations are — with the notable exception of the Catholic Church — almost the only contemporary institutions whose corporate thinking and planning transcend national boundaries. In this respect they have a huge advantage of manoeuvre over both the governments of the countries in which they choose to operate and the trade unions which seek to represent the interests of the workers they choose to employ.

The exaggerated hopes of a decade ago that trade unions would be able to develop a matching dimension of international effectiveness have not materialised. If anything, the recession and high unemployment have made most trade unions even more insular in defence of their own members. And national governments continue to allow themselves to be played off against each other out of desperation to attract and then keep investment.

THIS IS the significance of the slow and tentative steps that the European Community is making in the direction of legislation to regulate the activities of multinational corporations. It cannot be done successfully in one country, because those who make decisions about international investment would quite rationally avoid a country which had conspicuously more stringent requirements about disclosing corporate information, or more elaborate (and expensive) statutory requirements for taking the interests of employees into consideration. The Dutch, with the most progressive legislation protecting workers made redundant, are already beginning to suffer in this way.

Progress will only be made on these fronts on a Community-wide scale. For the EEC as a whole represents a market that international corporations have to come to terms with. Two pieces of Euro-legislation in this area have been slowly grinding their way through the system for a number of years. One is a draft directive, first approved by the European Commission in October 1980, known as the 'Vredeling proposal' after the then Dutch Commissioner responsible for Labour and Social Affairs (his successor, who has inherited responsibility for the project, is the British Commissioner Ivor Richard).

It forms part of the Commission's 'social action programme' in the field of company and labour law. It would require parent companies employing over 1,000 people in the Community to provide employees with information about the activities and plans of the group as a whole, in particular about such matters as transfers of production, closures and major changes in operations. If a local subsidiary fails to pass on this information to its employees, they would have the right to go straight to the parent company.

The point of this directive is that, in many cases involving international companies, information, consultation and negotiation with the local management is devoid of substance, since the corporate decisions that matter are being taken at a higher level. Ford UK, for example, is just a production, marketing and PR operation. The decisions that matter, affecting this country, West Germany, Spain and elsewhere, are made by Ford of Europe in consultation with the parent in the US.

The second directive has had an even longer history. Known as the Fifth Directive, in its present form it is the result of a decade of efforts to require public companies above a certain size to allow worker participation in corporate decision making. Representation of the interests of workers on the supervisory boards of German and Dutch companies has been the norm for decades. But the suggestion provokes knee-jerk hostility from British management and from those who run American and Japanese based multinationals.

Both these draft directives have at last reached the Council of Ministers. Given the current political complexion of the Council, it is unlikely that either will emerge as Community law in the near future. The British minister concerned is Norman Tebbit. When the directives were put out to 'consultation' at the end of last year, it was clearly stated that the government had not changed its 'strong opposition to the proposals'. There have been more than hints that it would use a veto, if necessary, to block progress.

But multinational companies work on longer time scales than politicians. They know that one day with another Council of Ministers either Vredeling or son-of-Vredeling will make it to the statute book. Which brings us back to Mr Amédée Turner. For in preparation for that day international business wants to make certain that the wording of the draft lying in the draw is as innocuous from their point of view as possible. Thus a massive lobbying campaign was mounted to get amendments made to the draft directives as they went through the European Parliament.

For example, Vredeling was changed so that the employment threshold for its application was raised from 100 to 1,000. Employers were given extended rights to withhold 'commercially sensitive' information. And workers are only to be allowed to appeal in writing to their parent companies. In all of this activity Mars and other multinationals played a major role. So did Mr Turner. No doubt, when re-elected, he will continue to do so. □

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PRIVATISATION

City bids for dirty linen

Francis Beckett reports on the latest moves to get ancillary workers out of the NHS

IN THE drawn-out battle over private contractors taking over NHS services, one hospital union has found how to play the game — and win.

The Exclusive Cleaning Group, with annual sales of £20 million, put in a remarkably cheap bid to clean London's Putney Hospital. But the union branch secretary, Leno Ruocco of the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE), put the proposal through a computer and discovered that they were allocating 13 seconds to clean each hospital bath, and one second per square foot of floor. At that speed no one could possibly clean to the standards of hygiene needed in a hospital. Patients would risk infection.

Exclusive offered the cheapest price, the hospital's own staff the second most expensive. But the staff won because they were able to prove the dangerous short cuts private companies would use.

Eighteen District Health Authorities have opted to defy the instruction at the risk of government penalties. Meanwhile in most of the country, hospital staff are locked in battle with commercial companies. Private companies tend not to hire ex-NHS staff, but to cut back on pay, hours, sick pay and holidays negotiated between unions and the NHS. The government intends any shift of work to speculators to be irreversible; any new hospitals are likely to be built without laundries, for example, so that cleaning sheets in-house will be permanently ruled out.

Junior Health Minister John Patten managed to force Cornish hospitals to send their laundry to Kneels Laundry Services by simply instructing the health authority not to consider the in-house tender which, he claimed, arrived too late.

Companies have been prepared to offer services cheap, as loss leaders, knowing that once the in-house facilities are closed and unusable, they will be able to charge what they like. In the case of Kneels, Trehidy Hospital which formerly housed the laundry could now be closed down, leaving no danger of in-house competition.

They used the same method to get the transport contract, and Leno Ruocco is buoyantly confident he'll win over catering, too, by going through the specifications with a careful eye for detail. Are menus as nourishing as hospital patients need? If they are, and they are cheap, can they really be provided at the price — or does the hospital risk putting itself in the hands of a shark who will raise prices and reduce quality as soon as in-house services have been disposed of?

If the staff is united in their determination to keep the work within the NHS — and they usually are — and if the tenders are handled fairly and objectively, then Ruocco thinks the in-house tender should win because, despite ministers' sneers, NHS staff do provide an efficient, cheap — and human — service.

The battle was sparked off by last September's Health Circular (83) 18 which instructed health authorities to put hospital services like cleaning, catering, transport, gardening and laundry out to tender by February this year. NHS ancillary staff have been under siege ever since by city gents looking at their jobs with the interest of the next owners.

But Health Circular (83) 18 is not only about who gets to wash hospital sheets and floors. Government policy is to have at least 25 per cent of health care — including these services — carried out by the private sector. The Pritchard Services Group, the largest company operating in the NHS and a multinational with a turnover of £300 million, sold the idea to the Conservative Medical Society Symposium and subsequently to the 1982 Conservative conference, after an elaborate public relations exercise aimed at Party activists.

Pritchards aren't just interested in cleaning. In the USA they run Kimberley Nurses, which provides temporary nurses to hospitals and nursing homes; BUPA is a principal Pritchards shareholder. And in Britain, private enterprise has already got its foot in the door to make profit from NHS patients. As reported in the *NS* (4 May), the Welsh Office wants to force Gwynnedd hospitals to hire privately-owned kidney dialysis units, while cutting Gwynnedd District Health Authority's budget by £1.8 million. Many health union officials now believe that the time is coming when the NHS will be expected to rent hospital beds from the private sector — when BUPA can spare them, of course.

Over the next few months, the vast majority of Britain's hospitals will be having one or more of their ancillary services put out to tender. Individually, there will be battles between NHS staff who want to keep their jobs, and companies looking for profitable contracts. But the companies and the government are looking beyond ancillary services to the lucrative commercial prospect of taking over the nation's health. □

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DIARY

One should gloat only occasionally. It was Richard Norton-Taylor's succinct report in the *Guardian* about the Left's turn towards Europe that provoked my satisfied laugh, 'Ha! Now they tell us!'. It was further stimulated by an outburst in the letters column against Ken Coates's change of mind. Well done Ken Coates, I say. The Left must shake out a lot more of its ideas to avoid the memorial service prematurely announced by the new Right. However, back to the gloat. It was my good friend Tom Nairn, way back in 1972, who wrote:

> To be in favour of Europe does not imply surrender to or alliance with the Left's enemies. It means exactly the opposite. It signifies recognising and meeting them as enemies for what they are, upon the terrain of reality and the future.

All he got from the organised Left at the time was either uninterest — Europe was not seen as 'an issue' — or scorn. It's good to see him vindicated.

○

I didn't realise that *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* took place in a miners' town during a lock-out by the pit owner. For I knew of John Arden's play only by its legendary reputation; which the United British Artists production at the Old Vic has now confirmed, with panache and expertise. One theme in the play is about Empire and how it can't be brought back home to roost, except in triumph. The dragoons dominate the stage at the close. Yet this is hardly its 'message'. Rarely can mutiny have been portrayed with such a comic range. The play ends with a moving explanation of how military logic can't be effective in the social and class struggle at home.

○

To see it when the miners are on strike is quite extraordinary, especially if you are not expecting any such coincidence. If you don't know the play, go to it as soon as possible, especially if you are a miner. For the 'conjuncture' — as they say — poses the old question of audience very sharply. The theatre was packed, which is great. But much of the audience seemed to be American tourists paying to see a brilliant performance by Albert Finney. And why not? Except that they did not really enjoy the play, whereas mining communities would have been set thinking and arguing about it. Probably it will never reach such an audience.

○

The role of military logic in miners' strikes made me ponder. I'm glad the miners are doing better than I expected. They have to win, not least because if they and Arthur Scargill are crushed The Boss may be in for life. Already the exit of the rat-like Len Murray is something to celebrate. Is there a word for the opposite of charismatic? His was the most deflationary countenance on the box. It's a relief to learn that we'll not have to see it after September. So if you've not done so already, send a cheque to the NUM Solidarity Fund, St James's House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield. Yet I desire a ballot, not for reasons of querulous constitutionalism, but because it is a much better way to win. I fear, however, that Scargill himself does not actually want a ballot; any more than Thatcher would have wanted a referendum during the Falklands War, irrespective of its outcome. Like many others I first noticed the way the Falklands began to corrupt British politics with the response of Dr Death. Its spread reached the Left last year when David Blunkett, whom I admire enormously, initiated the campaign to save the metropolitan councils by invoking 'the Falklands spirit' in their defence and adding:

> We have learned many lessons from Mrs Thatcher. We have learned that when you are going to sink a ship you don't tell it before you do it.

No, we should learn two things. One is that we must fight to win and that the other is that we must not take our tune from her.

○

Which brings me to 'Britain under The Boss'. Last month after relating the miserable, mean-minded ways of Wandsworth Borough Council, I asked for further examples of the pernicious effects of life under the present regime. Don't tell me! The prospect of becoming a left-wing Esther Rantzen is too odious. One young man travels five hours a day to get to a training scheme that pays £25 a week. Now that British Telecom has been hived off for privatisation, when it changes people's telephone numbers as it modernises the system, it no longer issues postage-free cards for sub-

scribers to inform their friends. A reader, taken in by the trumpeted superiority of private parcel services, sends a picture by one only to have it smashed. He has learnt that 'guaranteed 24 hour delivery' actually takes 48 hours, and breaks objects with more abandon than the GPO. He is now researching whether the private rip-off will refund quicker or slower than state enterprise. Meanwhile, a reader from Wandsworth itself writes with tonic energy of his fight-back:

> We are not all so docile as to put up with the thoroughly incompetent, selfish and wilful policies of this wretched Wandsworth Council.

Good luck to you all!

○

From penny pinching to bottom pinching under The Boss, as regaled by her favourite daily, the *Sun*. Back in April it ran a feature on Man Hunters: the 'new breed' of women. They take the first step and 'never have guilty feelings'. Says one, if you believe it:

> I go to art galleries because people go there to meet each other. I'll use a line like, 'It's pretty boring here isn't it? Let's go and do something more exciting'.

Perfect for the recent Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at the Tate. And says another:

> Our technique is to walk past a bloke we fancy and pinch his bum. That usually gets his attention.

The previous month the *Sun* denounced the TUC report on *Images of Inequality* for saying that pin-ups are 'offensive and degrading'. It called upon its male readers to send in their special endorsement of page three girls, while an editorial boasted that the *Sun* is the largest family paper in the land. 'Girls queue to appear in the Sun', it bragged, and concluded in underlined bold: *Sex Slaves? Never were there such willing victims!*. But there were no follow-up letters. Could it be that few men do actually enjoy having their eyeballs pinched?

○

I'm told that African music is where it is at. Being out of touch in this respect, all I can say is that Morrissey is much better than Tracey Ullman as a chronicler of 'Britain under The Boss'. The Smiths' new release comes as a relief from the current piety about work:

> I was looking for a job, and then I found a job and heaven knows I'm miserable now

Islander

ROGER WODDIS

Reagan's Oscar

Condemning Americans who support terrorists in Northern Ireland, President Reagan quoted Oscar Wilde's comment on war: 'When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.'

What is looked upon as vulgar
(And the President should know)
Is providing the essential means
For bringing horror to our screens
And causing blood to flow.

Such a consummate performance
In a most demanding role
By a star whose acting skills to date
Were never more than second-rate
Must stir the dullest soul.

One can only view with wonder
A production that combines
Sheerest humbug with a hammy script,
An act that kept his hearers gripped
By having learnt his lines.

If you authorise state terror
For some undercover cause,
It will hardly rate a press release,
But taking lives and talking peace
Deserves prolonged applause.

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Weapons without a sting

US missiles sent to Saudi Arabia are a token gesture to defend the indefensible oilflow reports Claudia Wright. But US officials will not speak the unspeakable — that Iraq's President must go

Washington

IN THE CURRENT Persian Gulf crisis, three facts are as plain as the Strait of Hormuz is narrow.

The first is that, militarily speaking, the Arab oil facilities in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain cannot be defended from a determined assault any better than Iraq's were. According to recently declassified documents, until at least the mid-1950s military planners and policy-makers on the American and British defence staffs believed that most of the Arabian peninsula and the oilfields and loading facilities on both sides of the Persian Gulf were militarily indefensible.

They also believed the oil of the region was not essential to the survival of the US and European economies in a world war. Consequently, they regarded the oilfields as not worth an expensive effort to try and defend. 'It would be unrealistic', the US joint chiefs of staff concluded in late 1952, 'for the Allies to count on getting any crude oil out from the head of the Persian Gulf area after the first weeks of war.'

Most of the contingency planning of the 1950s was purportedly based on the assumption that the Soviet Union would attack the Gulf, not to seize the oil for itself, but to prevent the Allies from getting their hands on it. In a 1952 study entitled 'Feasibility of Holding the Bahrain-Qatar-Saudi Arabia Area', the Pentagon decided that for a maximum of '60 to 90 days, there is a reasonable expectation that air defense measures will permit production to be maintained and oil to be exported'. After that, there could be no reliable defence of the oilflow.

But unknown to the Arab states, whom the US and Britain were formally pledged to defend, the secret objective of the Anglo-American plans was to deny the oilfields to the Soviets. The US planned to blow up Saudi and Kuwaiti oilwells, the British intended to dynamite the Iraqi and Iranian wells or fill them with concrete. For a long time the explosives were actually in place.

What has changed in the contingency plans is that the likelihood of a Soviet attack has diminished, the probability of regional warfare has increased and the capacity of Iran and the Arab forces to do almost as much damage as the great powers has gone up accordingly. Thus, although the origin of the military threats has changed and the political scenarios are very different, we are back to where we were in defensive terms. So long as Iran, Iraq, and the other Arab states hold their aircraft back from an all-out offensive against oil facilities, business can go on almost as normal. If the inhibitions against saturation bombing attacks were to be abandoned, however, there is no air defence that could keep the oil flowing for long.

The second fact is that the 'Stinger' missiles the Reagan Administration has sent to Saudi Arabia have next to no military value in the present crisis. The 'Stinger' was developed in the late 1970s by the General Dynamics Corporation to improve on the US 'Redeye', the British 'Blowpipe', and the SA-7 'Strela', the Soviet-made missile that was fired in large numbers by the Arab armies during the Ramadan war of 1973. The trouble with all of these hand-fired missiles is that their warhead is a very small one-kilogram explosive, lacks a proximity fuse, and must strike its target to detonate. Even then it is far from lethal — most modern jet aircraft can survive the blast.

Another problem with this type of missile is that its infra-red homing mechanism is too clumsy for most battlefield conditions. It is difficult to fire at aircraft from the head-on position. When 'Redeye' was despatched to the Chad army last August by an administration keen to show its power against the Libyan airforce, not a single missile fired properly from the tube. Firings in desert conditions are deflected by all the infra-red sources flashing across the landscape.

THE STINGER missile was supposed to have overcome these problems. It hasn't. The US army carried out secret tests in New Mexico but has never publicly revealed the results. They show that the Stinger was able to strike jet aircraft from the head-on position, but only if the attacker flew in a straight line, did not manoeuvre at all and did not drop modern heat flares to deceive the missile. The warhead is still too small to down most aircraft.

To compensate for these deficiencies, General Dynamics developed the Stinger-Post, which was test-fired in 1981-82 and went into production late last year. The new missile is slightly better against flare countermeasures, but only if target aircraft drop them slowly. According to officials at the US Army Missile Command, the missiles despatched to Saudi Arabia are the old Stinger type, not the new Stinger-Post.

In Gulf battle conditions, the old Stinger is virtually useless. And in bright desert sunlight and over water, the missile has been known to lock on to clouds and other harmless reflectors of the sun's infra-red rays.

The pilots of the Royal Saudi Air Force ought to know that the Stinger has no military value. Two of the senior US officials negotiating the transaction — Major-General Edward Tixier, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Lieutenant-General John Chain, Director of the Politico-Military Affairs Bureau at the State Department — ought to know too. They are both US Air Force officers and experienced Phantom jet pilots who flew against Soviet SA-7 missiles in Vietnam. US-trained Iranian pilots are likely to know how ineffective the Stinger is, and to employ the correct evasion tactics in case they are used. Who then is intended to be reassured or deterred by the shipment of the missiles?

The American press has not reported the problems with the Stinger and consequently made the Administration's move look more effective than it is. An Administration leak that the Stinger decision was partially intended to

Popperfoto

Stinger missile-firer, aiming for the clouds

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match a reported Soviet shipment of SS-21 missiles to Baghdad doubles the disinformation. US reports that the Soviet missile can hit the Iranian oil terminal at Kharg Island are contradicted by the short range of the missile — if delivered, it may be used (with chemical warheads) against Iranian troop concentrations along the border.

The Administration does not want to risk a genuine American military intervention in the Gulf before the presidential election, nor do the Saudis and Kuwaitis want to risk direct involvement of their forces against Iran. The irony in this situation is that by trumpeting their opposition to the sale of Stingers to the Arab states, the Israelis and their allies in Congress have made the charade look real to public opinion in the Arab world. As in the campaign against the sale of Stingers to Jordan earlier in the year, the Israeli game is designed to undermine the Administration's relationship with the Arabs and to increase the payoff in US assistance to Israel in return for letting the missile sale go through.

FINALLY, the third fact. The Iraq-Iran war is not going to end until President Saddam Hussein of Iraq steps down or is toppled. This is the privately acknowledged assessment of Gulf Arab officials, who trust Saddam no more than the Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as of several senior US intelligence officials. But no one is prepared to say so and initiate a discussion of the obvious question that follows: is there an Iraqi alternative to Sadaam that would preserve the traditional Sunni Moslem domination of Iraq and resist partition by the Iranians and the Turks?

The small pro-Iraqi faction at the State Department would like to save Sadaam and do more for Iraq's economy, particularly in financing the trans-Saudi Arabia and trans-Jordan oil pipelines that have been held up for lack of US government guarantees. The Pentagon is content to play tit-for-tat with the Soviets, supplying enough AWACs and photo intelligence to save the Iraqi army from surprises, and get better acquainted with the Iraqi officer corps that has been out of reach since the Ba'ath Revolution of 1968. The pro-Israel faction in Washington prefers to back Iran for the long run, and avoid committing US prestige to the rescue of any of the Arab Gulf states. The pro-Turkey lobby is too pre-occupied saving US military aid to Turkey from cuts as a consequence of Turkish mistakes in Cyrpus, to bother about restraining Turkish expansionism in the east. □

NIGERIA

Secrets of corruption

Suzanne Cronje reports on what Lagos's military trials cannot uncover

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN rights have been suspended in Nigeria. This deterioration was confirmed by a Lagos High Court judge at the end of last month.

Three former State Governors were seeking the civilian court's protection against a special military tribunal set up to try corruption cases. They argued that the military members of the tribunal were under the command of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), which had ordered their detention and the investigation which had led to the prosecution case; that the tribunal chairman was a member of the SMC; and that the validity of any sentence passed by the tribunal would be subject to confirmation by the same SMC.

Besides, they had been barred from access to documents to prepare their case and had not been allowed contact with any possible witnesses for the defence. The High Court allowed the three ex-politicians to apply for an order to halt the tribunal, which was already sitting. But minutes after the ruling was given, the Attorney General's office announced that General Buhari, Nigeria's Head of State, had signed yet another decree — No. 13 — putting the authority of his government beyond normal judicial processes.

Last week one of the accused, Onabisi Onabanjo, Governor of Ogun State until the military coup of 31 December, was sentenced to 22 years imprisonment by the military tribunal. The minimum sentence for anyone convicted is 21 years. The maximum is life imprisonment, although the SMC can change that to a term not exceeding 25 years. The other two accused were acquitted but remained in detention, pending confirmation of the verdict by the SMC.

It is impossible to assess the merits of the prosecution's case, since the tribunal sat in camera — even the families of the accused were refused admission. There were no defence lawyers, because the Nigerian Bar Association is boycotting the military tribunals as a protest against the way they were set up and the nature of the proceedings.

This was the first case to be tried and the charge was politically sensational. The ex-governors were accused of accepting 2.8 million nairas* in July last year from the French-owned contractors, Bouygues (Nigeria) Ltd, to 'corruptly enrich one person, namely the Unity Party of Nigeria', of which all three were prominent members. Since the coup, the UPN, as well as the other political parties, have been outlawed.

The accusation was first made in February at a press conference by the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon, who alleged that the ex-governors had all 'confirmed receiving the money'. Relatives of the accused denied this, claiming that the imprisoned men had not been questioned about the Bouygues transaction before Idiagbon's statement. The leader of the UPN, Chief Awolowo — one of Nigeria's veteran politicians and a Yoruba thorn in the flesh of Nigeria's Northern establishment for more than 30 years — issued a public clarification which said that the money had been a 'voluntary donation' to his party, paid in the form of a cheque made out to 'Anonymous GNS Ogun, Ondo and Oyo States', with the balance in cash.

The donors, he agreed, had been Bouygues, and the payments had been made directly to the UPN treasury, which had issued receipts. Bouygues denied making any such payment to the UPN, but it admitted that the contract for a 20-storey building in Lagos had been awarded to it for exactly ten times the amount of the alleged kick-back, and that the 2.8 million nairas — 10 per cent of the price — had been returned by Bouygues to the project managers since it represented advance payment for sub-contractors. The implication was that this amount had been paid to Bouygues by mistake in the first place.

THE DETAILS are of some interest because they are all we are likely to learn about the case. The verdict raises a number of interesting points: why was only one of the three ex-governors found guilty? What about the other parties involved — contractors, architects, managers, consultants and the clients themselves — the Great Nigeria Insurance Company Ltd? Onabanjo, who was given the 22-year sentence, was Governor of Ogun, Awolowo's home state.

The very fact that the case against the UPN politicians was the first to come before the military tribunal is in itself peculiar. When General Buhari took over last December, he spoke in his first broadcast about last year's elections and the 'ample evidence that rigging and thuggery were related to the resources available to the parties'.

No doubt, the UPN shared in these crimes, but ex-President Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which formed the Federal government, had the opportunity of getting kick-backs from much larger contracts — and it won the elections by an impossibly large margin. There was the £300 million contract with British Aerospace for Jaguar fighter planes, a price which incorporated a hidden commission of £22 million for a 'consultant' close to the deposed Shagari leadership. Soon after his statement on Bouygues, Idiagbon implicated yet another French-owned construction company, Fougerole (Nigeria) Ltd, which, he claimed, had paid a total of more than 23 million naira to key members of the NPN, some of whom he identified.

Everybody, including the NPN leadership, assumed that Buhari's coup was directly against the Shagari administration. In this belief, though many of the top NPN leaders escaped to live comfortably in exile on the fortunes which they managed to accumulate while in office, opposition politicians, including the UPN ex-governors, stayed put. When officials of the ousted administration were asked to report to the police, many of them did so voluntarily, only to be put in detention, where several

*1 naira equals approximately £1 at the official rate of exchange.

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hundred have been ever since.

What is not clear is why the first to be tried are members of the UPN — Awolowo, their leader, has been the most important opponent of the Shagari regime and earlier governments which usually represented Northern interests.

According to rumours in Lagos, the next trial before the military tribunal will involve ex-Governor Abubakar Rimi of Kano, the most progressive politician to emerge in Nigeria in recent years, who belonged to one of the smaller opposition parties.

LACK OF DEFINITE information on these trials is explained by yet another Buhari decree — No. 4, entitled 'Protection of Public Officers Against False Publication', which makes it an offence to publish rumours, or reports, bringing the government and its officials into disrepute.

Nigeria is accustomed to a lively if controversial press. The General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Jola Ogunlusi, recently pointed out that if Decree No. 4 had been in existence under Shagari, 'the military would never have had dossiers on which to base their intervention'. From now on, officials will be much more secure from a press which tried to embarrass political opponents by exposing their conduct.

Even establishment figures, such as Aliko Mohammed, the former Chairman of the Daily Times — the widest-circulating — who is now Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Northern Nigeria, has criticised Decree No. 4 and called for its review. Instead, the military are trying to fill the political vacuum with a campaign entitled War Against Indiscipline (WAI), which has done little more than provoke mirth. The black-out of news has given rise to widespread suspicions, usually unmerited, that the government plans even more repressive measures.

The trials do not even expose or punish the main sources of corruption. Donations to political parties, whether voluntary or not, are a minor ill compared to the outflow of Nigeria's wealth through illegal oil dealings.

Buhari himself said openly that he had reliable information that officials of the NPN administration had acquired their wealth illegally through oil sales; and he mentioned one of the most prominent of Shagari's colleagues by name in this context. Shagari himself, according to Buhari, could be blamed 'for not taking action when he was advised by security agencies about the misbehaviour of some of his ministers'. Yet there is no indication when any of these former Federal ministers will appear before the tribunal, although some key members are in detention.

If nothing is done to expose who was responsible for transactions which cost the country millions above the accepted figures — for instance in the purchase of the Jaguar planes — there will be trouble even in the army. One of the difficulties is the reluctance of the foreign participants in corruption to admit their role publicly.

Oil companies in particular are unlikely to testify in this respect. British trade partners have special reasons to keep a low profile: only last month a representative of the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD), Mr Gerry Breach, stressed that 'Nigeria is a major market which we must maintain'. □

CRUISE

Dutch double-track

Abi Daruvalla and Mark Fuller look at the Dutch government's clever attempt to dodge the cruise decision

Amsterdam

'HOLLAND is the first country to step out of the Nato missile schedule. That is a victory. Our task now is to make sure that the cabinet does not step back again in 1985.'

The words were from Mient Jan Faber, secretary of the Inter-Church Peace Council (IKV), which is the biggest and most influential of the 30 or so groups that make up the Dutch peace movement. He was reacting to the government's surprise announcement last Friday that it was putting off the final decision about accepting American cruise missiles until 1 November next year.

The decision was a clever political compromise. It met the requirements of conflicting political factions; it allayed Nato fears that the Netherlands would totally reject cruise deployment; it has divided the peace movement over how to react to the decision. However, it has given the peace movement a breathing space and has demonstrated the effect of their continual pressure over the last few years on the coalition government.

The five-point decision announced by Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, Foreign Minister Hans van der Broek and Defence Minister Joop de Ruiter can be interpreted in many ways. The Dutch government has agreed 'in principle' to accept cruise deployment, but will only accept the 48 missiles to which it was originally committed if there has been no progress in arms control negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States by the date for the final agreement, next November.

Meanwhile, preparatory work on the proposed missile site at Woensdrecht has been delayed until 1986 (which was the original date for operational deployment). 1986 is also the date of the next general election and the cruise decision is expected to be a major election issue. Deployment now could not take place before 1988, though the paperwork (tenders, licences, planning applications) will continue.

THE DECISION ended the political crisis over cruise, which over the past few months has threatened to bring down the coalition government. The right-wing Liberal Party (VVD) remains united in its commitment to deploy. But the Christian Democrats (CDA), the senior coalition partner, remain painfully split. Lubbers and his Foreign Minister want to deploy. Defence Minister de Ruiter does not.

There are already major differences of interpretation of the decision within the government parties. CDA leader Bert de Vries says that Holland will automatically refuse cruise missiles if the Russians freeze SS-20 deployment at the present level. But VVD leader Ed Nijpels said that this would only be the case if there was a substantial reduction in Soviet SS-20 deployment.

A rift also became apparent at once in the peace movement's reaction to the decision, in particular between the IKV and the Committee Cruise Missiles No! (KKN), which groups together various peace organisations, political parties and trade unions, KKN organised the mass peace rallies in Amsterdam in 1981 and The Hague last year.

The optimism of IKV's Faber has irritated others in the peace movement. Last Saturday KKN met to discuss the situation and could not find a single positive element in the government's compromise decision. KKN's chairwoman Sinie Strikwerde said afterwards: 'The time for mass action is over. Something other than continuously lying down in front of fences is needed now. We must influence parliament and put forward the arguments why cruise deployment should not go ahead'. Interestingly that has long since been the strategy of IKV.

One of the most outspoken critics of the cruise decision was Nico Schouten, secretary of Stop the N-Bomb and Stop the Nuclear Arms Race. 'The cabinet', he said, 'totally fails to recognise the unwillingness of the Americans to come to any arms control agreement. Therefore the decision will not lead to arms control, but to arms increase'.

The Dutch peace movement has been putting increasing pressure on the government since the announcement last June that Woensdrecht, 20 kilometres north of Antwerp, had been selected as the cruise site. A few days later, 7,000 peace campaigners marched through the town and put flowers on the fence of the existing American air base. In October, over 5,000 people took part in the peace rally in The Hague.

Last month protest action was stepped up in anticipation of the government decision, which was expected at the end of June. A week of action from 6-12 May, organised by the KKN, involved some 4,600 activities throughout the country, including a symbolic 15-minute strike by an estimated 900,000 workers (supported by the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions). On 27 May, 2,000 motorcyclists staged a protest ride around Woensdrecht air base. On 31 May, a demonstration attracted 5,000 to Woensdrecht to hear what its organisers called 'the biggest ever orchestra' play a song specially composed for the occasion.

Then on 1 June, the day of the surprise government announcement, several thousand demonstrators began a three-day blockade of 14 entrances of the American air base. Intended to be peaceful, it developed into angry confrontation with riot police and 14 demonstrators were arrested.

Last Monday, 60 protestors broke into the Amsterdam offices of the pro-nuclear VVD Liberaly party and caused considerable damage. It was several hours before riot police could remove the intruders, arresting 30 people. On the same day, the Amsterdam peace movement organised a march which attracted 2,000 people. □

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EGYPT

Non-voters win the day

Deborah Pugh reports on the first free elections for over 30 years

AT FIRST glance it would appear that President Mubarak has much to be satisfied with following the overwhelming success of his National Democratic Party in the recent elections to the Maglis al-Sha'ab, Egypt's People's Assembly. Yet the results have confronted him with a major setback.

The atmosphere of the elections was marred by opposition accusations of intimidation and rigging, given credibility by the murder of one woman candidate and the wounding of the wife of another by government supporters. The turn-out was low, and election laws meant that the left wing failed to gain a single seat.

The multi-party elections did live up to the official promise that they would be the freest and fairest since the 1952 Revolution. While there was no doubt that the National Democratic Party (NDP) would win because of its superior organisation, its influence among rural voters and the overwhelming inbuilt bias of the new election laws, there was definitely less of the blatant rigging which turned elections under President Sadat into a charade.

Many Egyptians were particularly impressed at the freedom of expresion allowed during the campaign. The country was festooned with banners, rallies were held every day and the opposition press was not censored. Most strikingly, the government finally agreed to allow the leaders of the four opposition parties to address the nation on television and radio — an important concession in a country where the majority of the population is illiterate.

The success of the New Wafd Party in gaining all the opposition seats can have given little comfort to the President. For the exclusion of the Egyptian Left has called into doubt the Assembly's claim to be the legitimate forum for national debate. The two left-wing parties which together polled 11 per cent of the national vote failed to win a single seat because the law required a party to poll a minimum of 8 per cent of the total vote to qualify.

The New Wafd, the old pre-revolutionary Wafd Party, resuscitated by its aging leadership, fought on the basis of its historic appeal as the liberal nationalist party of 'the good old days'. It polled 15 per cent of the vote and won 57 seats. The victorious NDP with 73 per cent of the vote, in addition to all those transferred to it from the parties which failed to qualify, have 391 seats. As a result of the low voter turnout (43 per cent of the less than 50 per cent even who bothered to register) — a reflection of the apathy engendered by years of rigging — the NDP's majority is based on the support of a paltry 15 per cent of the total potential of the electorate.

By international standards this is not unusual but it does fall far short of the mandate President Mubarak had hoped to receive from the Egyptian people. For, if President Nasser had natural charisma and Sadat was an international superstar, President Mubarak has been seeking to be accepted as Egypt's democratic president.

Many Egyptians believe that Mubarak's democratic instincts are genuine, but that he is fighting powerful entrenched interests within the NDP. Many of Sadat's closest associates were widely implicated in the charges of corruption, profiteering and mismanagement associated with the liberalisation of the Egyptian economy and still hold powerful positions in the party, which Sadat founded. The sudden death of Prime Minister Fuad Moheddine on Tuesday, who was said to have led the conservative 'Sadatists' within the party may help Mubarak to bring it more firmly under his control.

While failing to touch the 'big boys' within the party, like multi-millionaire contractor Osman Ahmed Osman, Mubarak did replace a full third of NDP candidates in an effort to clean up the party's tarnished image before the elections.

This move was aided by the voracious criticism of the NDP by the opposition press, freed under President Mubarak. Indeed, it is this criticism which many observers believe has bolstered reformists within the NDP and will now be lacking within the new assembly. The left-wing Socialist Labour Party and the Progressive Unionist Party may well have played a 'constructive' role in pushing for reform. Certainly, one of the most revealing aspects of this campaign was the delicacy with which Egyptian intellectuals, almost all of whom oppose the government, distinguished the President from the Sadat stalwarts.

A question mark now hangs over the Wafd's role. Faced with having to field over 400 candidates within a few months of being legalised as a party, many diverse elements were welcomed. Even the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood made an electoral alliance and ran on the Wafd list. Having won an estimated 12 seats the Brotherhood — Islamic fundamentalists — is expected to form a separate grouping within the assembly.

President Mubarak's position is now uncertain. Despite the NDP's massive majority he cannot claim the personal legitimacy that a good turnout and a representative assembly would have given him. Without it, he may well continue to be reluctant to institute the reforms that are needed before many Egyptians will enter the electoral process with any enthusiasm. Rather than providing a transitory period in the gradual move towards greater political participation and social justice, which many Egyptians had hoped for, the elections may well have led to a stalemate. □

Arms for Iraq ships for Iran

IRAQ HAS enjoyed the backing of most of the Arab states in its war with Iran — and none has been so supportive as Saudi Arabia. However, new information shows that the Saudis have at the same time been assisting the Iranian war economy.

Saudi Arabia and other Arab states complained in April to the UN Security Council about Iranian attacks on shipping in the Gulf. As Tehran pointed out, there was more than a trace of hypocrisy in the strident condemnations of Iran, since Iraq has been just as guilty.

Except for Syria and Libya, however, the Arab states have sided with Iraq in the Gulf war, and their material assistance has been vital to Baghdad. In the first two years of the conflict, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Quatar and the United Arab Emirates reportedly provided Baghdad with loans and grants totalling $25 billion. Most of this came from the Saudis, and early last year they agreed to supply a further $6 billion for the first half of 1983 alone.

The *NS*, however, has learned how Saudi Arabia, while bankrolling the Iraqi war effort, has also been assisting Iran, albeit indirectly. Iran's economy is vitally dependent on oil exports, and these have been severely curtailed by Iraqi air attacks on tankers calling at Kharg Island, Iran's main oil terminal. Two of the vessels recently hit — the *Al Ahood* and the *Al Arab* — were Saudi-owned supertankers which had called at Kharg.

The 357,023 dwt *Safina Al Arab* was attacked by Iraqi aircraft on 25 April, 100 miles north east of Bahrain, on its way out of Kharg Island. It was the vessel's second such trip. The *Safina Al Arab* is owned by the As Safina Company of Riyadh, and when hit was being operated by Salen Tanker AB of Stockholm. The As Safina Company owns another supertanker, the *Safina Sahara*, which has also been carrying Iranian oil. It sailed from Kharg on 16 April, heading for Europe.

The As Safina Company is a joint venture with Saleninvest of Stockholm, who own about 40 per cent of the firm. Mr Clarence Dybeck, Managing Director of Salen Tanker AB (which is part of Saleninvest), refused to disclose the Saudi co-owners of As Safina. The *NS*, however, has established that about 60 per cent of the company is owned by HRH Prince Faisal Ibn Fahn Ibn Abdul Aziz, son of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, and the kingdom's Minister of State with responsibility for Youth Welfare.

The 117,710 dwt *Al Ahood* was hit on 7 May, 80 miles south east of Kharg Island, where it had taken on a load of Iranian crude oil. It was the second time this year that the vessel had loaded in Iran. On 29 January it took on a cargo from the Sirri Island oil terminal, on Iran's south eastern coast. The *Al Ahood* is owned by the Amar Line Maritime Company of Jeddah, and has recently been operated by Shipping Management SAM of Monte Carlo.

Silver Line, Amar's London agents, while insisting that there was no secret about Amar's shareholders, refused to provide any details. The *NS*, however, has learned that the firm is 100 per cent owned by a company named Andweel Holdings Inc. One of Andweel's owners is the Boris Vlassof shipping group of Monte Carlo (which also owns Shipping Management SAM). London shipping circles understand that the major shareholder in Andweel, and hence in the *Al Ahood*, is another prominent member of the Saudi royal family.

Alan George

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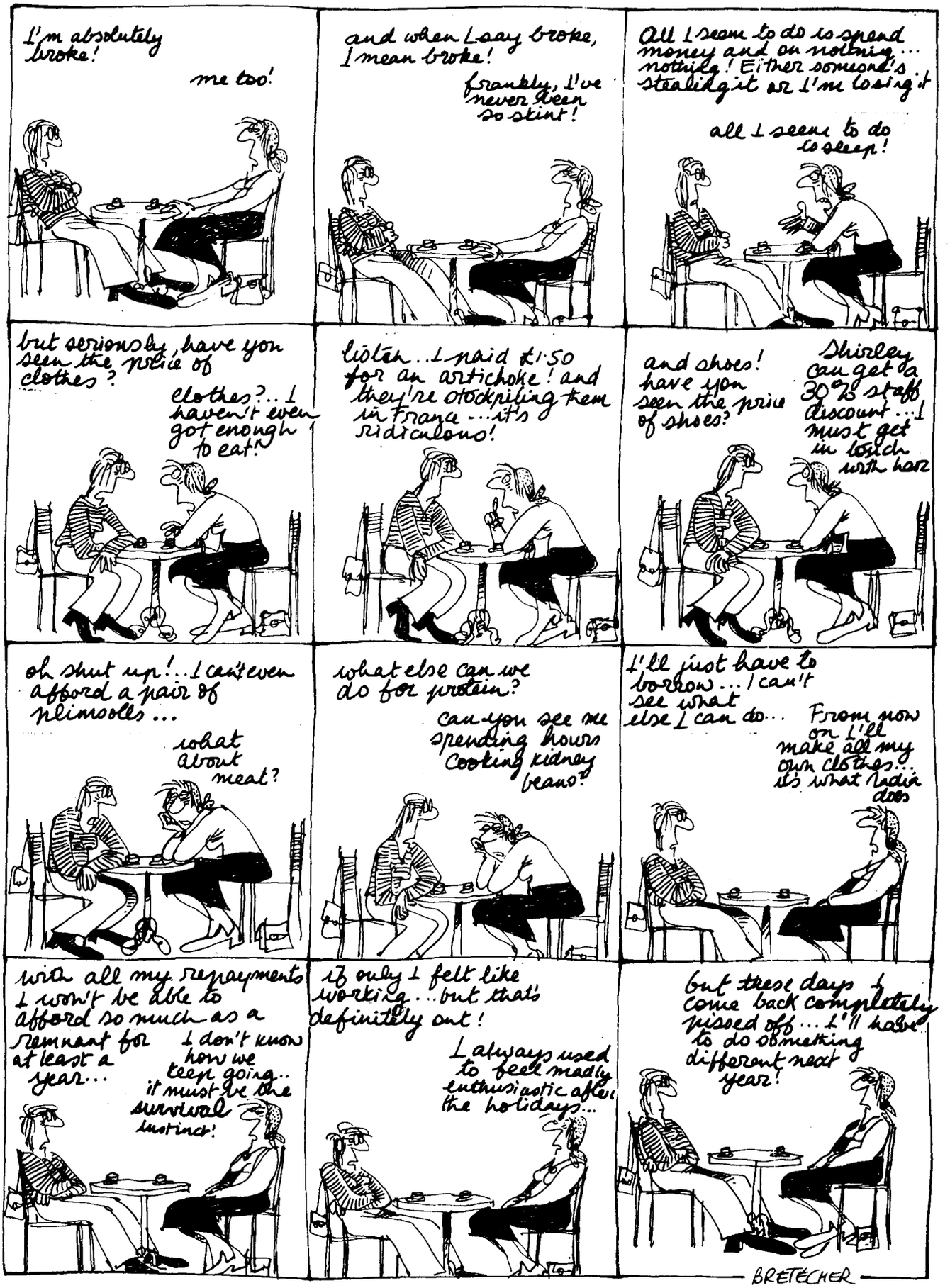
BRETECHER

IN THE RED


I'm absolutely broke!
me too!
and when I say broke, I mean broke!
frankly, I've never been so stint!
All I seem to do is spend money and on nothing... nothing! Either someone's stealing it or I'm losing it
all I seem to do is sleep!
but seriously, have you seen the price of clothes?
clothes?.. I haven't even got enough to eat!
listen.. I paid £1.50 for an artichoke! and they're stockpiling them in France ... it's ridiculous!
and shoes! have you seen the price of shoes?
Shirley can get a 30% staff discount ... I must get in touch with her
oh shut up!... I can't even afford a pair of plimsolles ...
what about meat?
what else can we do for protein?
can you see me spending hours cooking kidney beans?
I'll just have to borrow ... I can't see what else I can do...
From now on I'll make all my own clothes... it's what Nadia does
with all my repayments I won't be able to afford so much as a remnant for at least a year...
I don't know how we keep going.. it must be the survival instinct!
if only I felt like working ... but that's definitely out!
I always used to feel madly enthusiastic after the holidays...
but these days I come back completely pissed off ... I'll have to do something different next year!
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

The Party replies...

J.E. Mortimer, General Secretary, The Labour Party

It is easy to criticise the functioning of the Labour Party's headquarters (*NS* 1 June) if you have no responsibility for making changes within a requirement to bring about an improvement in the Party's financial position.

Just over two years ago the Party was heading for an end-of-the-year overdraft of more than £750,000. Arrears of back-pay to staff amounted to more than £400,000. The Party had no reserves. There was, in my view, no alternative but to take immediate remedial measures. The number of staff employed was cut by 'natural wastage'. Certain items of capital expenditure were deferred and a freeze was imposed in response to all 1982 salary claims. In 1983 we made a surplus on our operating account, a separate modest surplus on the General Election account and the end-of-the-year overdraft was reduced. The arrears of back-pay have now been completely eliminated.

There are, however, no grounds for complacency. At the 1983 annual conference the unions were not able to afford an increase in affiliation fees. They subscribed generously for the General Election. Trade union affiliated membership continues to decline because of depression and mass unemployment. In addition, there are new threats to our finances in the Trade Union Bill at present going through Parliament. An effort has been made to switch resources towards campaigning. A fund-raiser has been appointed and we will be appointing a sales and marketing manager.

Your article criticised the decision not to merge the Research Department and the International Department. That is the responsibility of the National Executive Committee but I think they are right. The Party needs an international identity with an international secretary. The department is small but it does an essential job.

Pacts or pax?

Barry Rydz, Corsham, Wilts.

Peter Kellner, like the party apparatchiks we hear so much from, is too close to the trees to see the wood (*NS* 25 May).

Why should Alliance supporters 'have Labour's best interests at heart'? As a lifelong Liberal I am not much concerned about the future of the Labour Party; or of the Liberal Party, come to that. I am concerned about the sort of government we get. It is interesting to see how closely Kellner's arguments parallel those of Tony Greaves in a recent 'Liberal News'. They are not to be diverted by a generation of aimless and resentful unemployed; by civil liberties consigned to the bonfire; or by the growing commitment to nuclear war. All these are the price to be paid for the millenium round the corner.

And what will Labour's new dawn, unsullied by Liberal hands, look like? Perhaps like the years of Labour majority 1964-70, with it sucking up to the conservative and military establishment, secret plans for new weapons, dirty tricks over Rhodesian sanctions, expulsion of journalists at the behest of the CIA, and flirtation with monetarism on the instructions of the IMF.

The facts are that in the policy areas of immediate concern to an incoming government — economic expansion and public investment; restoration of fair taxation policies; defence of welfare provision; a halt to the arms race; support for oppressed nations overseas; a return to local democracy; the repeal of the Police Bill and other repressive legislation; freedom of information — majority views in the Labour and Liberal Parties (and perhaps the SDP also) are very close. Anyone who has attended a Liberal Assembly knows that the bulk of Liberal activists are as fiercely anti-cruise as their counterparts in the Labour Party, although in both parties the Parliamentary leaderships are divided on some aspects of defence policy.

Although we may never have a straight two-party system again, the fact remains that there are two broad tendencies in political outlook. And the authoritarian tendency, although normally in a minority, has usually prevailed in this country because, unlike the Left, they get their priorities right and recognise that there are times when they cannot afford to divide over secondary issues.

Kellner rightly says that voter reaction to a pact is unpredictable. Liberal voters may well distrust the commitment of Labour politicians to reform, on their record; and the Thatcherite sympathies of a section of Labour's old electorate, especially since the Falklands, may remain a millstone round the neck of that party. But if Labour and the Alliance continue to treat this Parliament as an elimination contest for the right to fight Thatcher they will earn the deserved contempt of the deprived in our society and they will find that many of their supporters, like myself, can be included out until they come to their senses.

All that jazz

Chris Wagstaff, Reading

What is the purpose of a jazz column? Charles Fox (*NS* 25 May) quotes Duke Ellington to the effect that earnest critical talk 'stinks up the place', but I doubt whether that justifies the tendency to bland platitude that we are often offered. Moreover, even the sweetest-smelling criticism or comment must be coherent and accurate, surely?

Fox says that *One O'Clock Jump* and *Mood Indigo* are both blues. The Basie piece certainly is; the Ellington piece is in AABA song form, 16 bars long, rather than 32, with a harmonic structure quite different from that of the blues. The two pieces, says Fox, are revealing of the characters of the different men, and he applies the concept of the work ethic to Ellington. Stanley Dance says that Ellington composed *Mood Indigo* in 15 minutes. Fox quotes Barney Bigard as saying that *he* composed it, and rather than deal with who exactly did compose the piece, Fox asserts that the orchestration is what matters about the piece anyway. However, if you listen to the recording, you will notice that it is one of Ellington's least 'orchestrated' pieces, and relies for its effect on the simplest and most straightforward traditional New Orleans voicing (Fox hints at this himself); give the musicians the tune, and it more or less plays itself that way.

So: *how* does *Mood Indigo* reflect the character that Fox attributes to Ellington? Who wrote it? And what is its form? If these things are not important enough to investigate 'earnestly', maybe it would be better not to write about them at all.

Labouring women

Jane Prust, Birmingham

Valerie Foley (Letters 25 May) says: 'Instead of demanding privileges for women's conference, the young radical women who have flowed into the party in the last few years should consider becoming more closely involved at the grass roots of the Labour Party.' She implies that it is these 'young radical women' who are moving the Women's Action Committee in the wrong direction.

I wonder how Ms Foley has obtained the impression that all the supporters of the Women's Action Committee are young. I attended WAC fringe meetings during Women's Conference and I can assure her that there were women of all ages present, and I don't think that all of them would necessarily describe themselves as 'radical' (whatever that means). What they did have in common, however, was a desire to open up the structures of the Labour Party and to make the Labour Party more accessible to all women.

These same women are already active in their local Labour Party branches and are concerned with all the issues which Ms Foley mentions, but at every corner we are running up against the same old wall of white, male prejudice, indifference and apathy. Certainly women can be elected to General Management Committees, they can be delegates to conference, they can hold office in their branches. But it is very difficult for the women in these positions to be taken seriously if they put forward ideas for organisational changes. Until the Labour Party is prepared to take notice of, and give space to women's ideas, it is not going to be attractive to the 'ordinary woman worker' of whom Ms Foley speaks. (And what of the many women who do not have paid jobs?)

Nobody is pretending that giving more power to the Women's Conference is going to solve all these problems overnight, but until women have an organisational base and a power base to which we can refer, our demands and concerns will continue to be marginalised by men in the party. In order for women to achieve the policy changes which we may want to see, it is necessary for us to organise politically. The resolutions supported by WAC at this year's Women's Conference are aimed at creating structures within the Labour Party which women can then use to put forward their demands. At the present time these demands rarely get further than debate at branch or constituency level, because many men simply do not see such issues as women's health care, nursery school provision and sexist advertising as being of any great importance.

Until the Labour Party is seen to be doing something practical and concrete for women it will never appeal to the vast majority of women. They will continue to see it as a bureaucratic irrelevance.

Euro-election slip of the pen

In the breakdown of the 1979 Euro-election result (*NS* 18 May), we attributed 3 per cent of the vote in the Irish Republic to 'Sinn Fein', and added in a note that Sinn Fein was the political wing of the IRA. In fact Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, did not contest those elections, although it is participating this time. The 3 per cent vote was gained by Sinn Fein the Worker's Party, now simply called the Workers' Party, which has no connection with paramilitaries and which opposes 'terrorist' murder and violence.

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Reaching the parts other books can't reach

This week, while Britain plays host to the First International Feminist Book Fair, we have devoted our books pages to women's views of women's writing. Here, ***Gill Hanscombe*** *argues that women should not be side-tracked by commercial success*

SHOULD I NOT feel cheered? There's a flurry of planning; feminist notables from all over the globe are flying in; thousands of women's books and their publishers are gathered in one place; even Fleet Street's preparing coverage. London's hosting the First International Feminist Book Fair — a central trade event flanked by seminars, workshops and meetings — which will be followed by Feminist Book Week throughout Britain and Ireland. Our words — millions of them — are out there visible, strong and available.

But I sit inside at my desk, looking out. I'm even more wary of what's going on out there in the world than I was ten years ago, when the first women's publishing houses were founded. Feminist publishing is a new marker on today's map, but it's an old map. Out there in the world it looks remarkably like a re-run of the 1950s.

True, some characteristics appear rather different this time round, but that happens with re-runs. Something like Peronism has begun in Britain, for example; and western politicians now can quite safely leave McCarthyism to the press. Rebelliousness, as then, is introspective: young people are preoccupied with job-hunting, drugs and pop music, rather than with social revolution. Academe is busy navel-gazing, worrying about tenure and pensions, rather than radical curricula. Headlines about horrors abroad pass in front of our eyes and into the rubbish bin. There are rumbles about the nuclear threat. 'The poor' is once again a phrase in our chat about the state of society.

Feminist publishing has a clear profile in this dour climate. Quite simply, it's booming. Its commercial success is obvious: books pour from the women's houses — Onlywomen Press, Sheba Feminist Publishers, Stramullion Co-operative Ltd (the Scottish lesbian house at 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh EH1 2QB), Women's Press (who run — in addition — a mail order book club offering discounts on their own and other houses' feminist books) and Virago. They come, too, in a steady stream from mainstream houses who either — like Routledge and Kegan Paul — have their own feminist imprints (RKP's is Pandora), or who include a number of feminist studies in their own lists, as do Martin Robertson.

Such success shows that there's a huge market for women's voices, something booksellers have now discovered, so that early problems of reliance on mail order and on recalcitrant distributors are now considerably mitigated. But is it women's books or feminist books that the common reader wants?

In one sense, the expanding lists could mean that people are now ready and eager to hear women's voices telling it how it is (and was): fiction, history, health, philosophy and — extraordinary to traditional publishing — women's poetry. All are selling well. But perhaps that isn't surprising. After all, women's voices have always been heard, here in Britain, anyway. Women have played a major part as producers of fiction, for example, for at least two centuries.

Cath Jackson

What is more revealing than how many copies are sold is what is and is not reviewed, or even mentioned, on the books pages of national newspapers and journals. Revealing for one stark reason. Feminist publishing is a two-fold phenomenon, of which the commercial factor is only one part, and that the least important. Its essential feature is that it is a political activity. Between the two lies a grey area of uneasy definition.

It's not that women *qua* women are ignored by the keepers of the culture: any number of romantic novels, cookery, keep fit and gardening books — in short, the commonly accepted women's fare — are dutifully announced by literary editors for the common reader. It's feminist books for which the wall of silence is reserved: what American feminist Adrienne Rich calls 'the censorship of silence'.

That, too, is hardly surprising. Non-feminists and — even more so — anti-feminists, are not stupid. They realise very well that feminism endangers the status quo and that it therefore ought to remain marginalised and contained. The keepers of mainstream culture — and they include some women — have no objection at all to women or what we write, so long as it's recognisably of the feminine kind. But real feminism — subversion of traditional culture and its 'standards' — must be kept out of sight. And, for subversion, read perversion.

Feminism seeks to shift the current definition of literary culture. A literary culture ought, after all, to define itself by what's being written and to listen most carefully to voices from the margins, because it's they who see most clearly what those at the centre are blind to. But we have, instead, a view of literary history and a set of 'standards' promulgated by universities and sustained by such worthies as the *TLS*.

The political base on which feminism rests is one that rejects the sacred cows of the mainstream, one of which is that art is 'pure' (meaning beyond gender) and that 'good writing' is impartial of special bias (meaning race, class, gender and sexuality are never limiting factors to the truly creative imagination). This cow was born of an older sacred cow: that people are just people and share a common human nature. Just as liberal humanists cry 'keep politics out of sport', so, too, they deny the political propaganda power of mainstream culture, arguing that creativity is above and beyond the daily grime and sordidness of injustice and oppression. And by denying that their 'standards' are white, male and bourgeois, they deny that the arena of cultural politics exists.

Feminists know the opposite to be the truth. We know that gender and sexuality are the most powerful of all the harnesses of human creativity. We know that no mind is gender-free. We know that literary editors are wrong to persist in the belief that judgment, any more than creative imagination, can be 'objective': that it matters very much whether books are reviewed by women or men, black or white women or men, lesbian or heterosexual women, gay or straight men. And we know, too, that there's nothing common about books by and about us or about their readership. We know these things because our experience of living in the world is quite different from that of men and from that of women who believe what men have told them. So the books we write and read we ought also to be reviewing.

As well as denying a common culture and a common readership, we know too that we don't share a common language. Dorothy Richardson, for instance, argued relentlessly against H. G. Wells and his belief in scientific objectivity, saying that he'd never understand her view because (and simply because) he was a man. 'By every word they utter,' she wrote, 'men and women mean different things.'

Nor do we share a common space. Mark

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Twain — more honest than most men about these things — wrote to a friend that he couldn't bear Jane Austen's novels because they showed a world in which men were marginalised and women stood centre-stage.

Nor can we assume a common striving after truth. A friend of mine recounted how her female colleagues found a current feminist catalogue frightening, freely admitting that the mere sight of such titles made them wonder whether they'd have to go back to brass tacks and question everything.

And 'everything' brings me back to the grey area between politics and commerce; between subversion and success; between the unspoken threat and the exuberance of display that the Feminist Book Fair exhibits. It lies in the hinterland between 'women's books' and 'feminist books': between assimilated voices and gender-specific voices; between heterosexual women still engaging with men and their world as if it were one world and lesbian women who eschew what is not theirs in quest of their own.

Because it's lesbianism that stings the consciousness: the passing into reality of women saying change is what we want and change is what we're doing. We've begun, these two decades, to write and read about how it really is for us: as daughter and mother; young and old; worker and houseworker; white and non-white. But the end of the line is what it's like to be lovers: to share with each other what we were taught should be shared only with men. And that kind of lesbianism isn't about civil rights: it's about social revolution.

It's because that's the real mission of feminism — to change the world — that I sit with a wary eye, looking out. Those of us who share this vision are well aware that most people don't want the world changed, not that way. And aware that heterosexual feminists may sense that, yes, that is the way, but say, Please, not yet.

So should I be despondent, realising that change is far off and the need for radicals to crawl back into the woodwork may be nigh? Or should I be hopeful, seeing all these books as a sign that change has begun? Who knows. . . At least I have one gauge: if now is the 1950s again, then the 1960s must be waiting in the wings. □

Gill Hanscombe is a freelance writer and journalist. She is the author of Between Friends *and* The Art of Life: Dorothy Richardson and the Development of Feminist Consciousness *and co-author of* Title Fight. *She is currently working on a book to be called* The Other Bloomsbury.

Cath Jackson

WOMEN OF COLOUR
Barbara Smith

Our stories

IN 1973 I TAUGHT one of the first courses in the USA on Black women writers*. The most frequent reaction I got whenever I mentioned the course to somebody, or used the term Black women writers, was a blank stare. Black literature was what Black men wrote. Women's literature was what white women wrote. Thanks to sexism and racism, the writing of Black women and of other women of colour was invisible.

More than ten years later, the term 'Black women writers' is much more likely to strike a responsive chord. Toni Morrison has appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*. Alice Walker has received the Pulitzer Price. But increased interest in the writing of women of colour did not come about because above-ground media and critics decided to single out a few best-selling authors. It resulted from a grassroots movement of women of colour — including teachers, researchers and feminist activists — who had been working for years to discover, support and create artistic works that accurately reflect our experiences in a white-male-dominated system.

In 1984, writing by Afro-American women constitutes nothing less than a literary renaissance and more and more writing by other US women of colour — American Indian, Latina and Asian American — is also available. It is not possible in this limited space to explore even a fraction of the major themes prevalent in this writing, but I would like to mention several general topics that many, though not all, of these writers address.

A fundamental concern of writing by women of colour is the exploration of what it means to be female *and* a person of colour *and* economically oppressed *and* officially or un-officially colonised *and*, in some cases, Lesbian, in a society that is hostile to every aspect of one's identity. As Toni Morrison writes of the young girls, Sula and Nel, in her novel *Sula*: 'Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be.' This self-defining function is cited by the editors of *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* in their introduction to the first collection of short stories by Latinas written from an explicitly feminist perspective.

> Particularly for so many Latinas who can no longer claim our own country, or even the domain of our own homes — barely holding *la tierra* below our feet — we need *una literatura* that testifies to our lives, provides acknowledgement of who we are: an exiled people, a migrant people, *mujeres en lucha*.

Work which incorporates autobiographical elements is a tradition of all oppressed writers, because our stories are continually ignored and dismissed. The necessity for this kind of writing is particularly critical for women of colour who encompass multiple 'unacceptable' identities within one skin.

A unique capacity of Third World women writers is the way in which they integrate concern with external political forces with scrutiny of the internal politics in our communities that also keep us oppressed. Third World women writers do not hesitate to explore such issues as the pressure on us to assimilate and to deny our cultures; sexual abuse at home; or the gulfs within our groups caused by differences of colour and class. Nor are they reluctant to define these problems as being as political and worthy of struggle as the more traditional 'isms'.

Another sign of transformation from the early 1970s until now is that so much more writing by women of colour is physically available. When I first began teaching Black women writers, major texts such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Ann Petry's *The Street* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* were constantly kept out of print by commercial publishers. Currently, commercial houses publish a token number of works by women of colour, usually by Afro-American women, but it is the alternative presses that are producing the most politically vital and risk-taking work by women of colour in the USA — particularly

**The term 'Black' is specifically used here to refer to people of African origin, including Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. The terms 'women of colour' and 'Third World women' are used interchangeably to refer to American Indian, Latina, Asian American and Black women in the USA and to women from Third World countries all over the globe.*

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writings by Lesbians of colour. Progressive Third World Lesbians have been at the forefront of all the political organising and writing which has helped provide the context for *all* women of colour to express themselves both artistically and politically.

Publications such as the pamphlet *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* (which I originally wrote in 1977 for *Conditions: Two*, a Lesbian feminist literary magazine); *Conditions: Five, The Black Women's Issue* (a special issue of *Conditions* which I co-edited with Lorraine Bethel in 1979); *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (an anthology co-edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa in 1981); and *All the Women are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (co-edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and myself and published by The Feminist Press in 1981) are presently considered basic Third World feminist texts and are all available from small presses.

The founding in 1981 of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press — the first publisher in North America committed to producing and distributing the work of Third World women of all racial/cultural heritages, sexualities and classes — was partially motivated by our need, as Third World women, to have complete control over both the content and the production of our words — control which is usually not available even when working with feminist and alternative publishers. The first four titles from Kitchen Table, all published during 1983-'84, are *Narratives: Poems in the Tradition of Black Women* by Cheryl Clarke; *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* co-edited by Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga and Mariana Romo-Carmona; the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which the Press took over after its original publisher disbanded; and my own *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*.

Although commercial publishers claim that work by women of colour, especially by Lesbians, does not sell, the experience of Kitchen Table and other alternative presses indicates quite the opposite. By targeting those readers most likely to be interested in such work, these books have sold extremely well. Anthologies such as *This Bridge Called My Back, But Some of Us Are Brave* and *Home Girls* have sold in multiples of 10,000 and the audience for these titles is far from saturated.

The organising of women of colour in the USA is of course linked to Third World women's organising globally, including the incredible work being done by the Black women's movement in Britain. The forthcoming special issue of *Feminist Review* entitled *Many Voices, One Chant: Black Feminist Perspectives*, edited by Gail Lewis, Pratibha Parmar, Val Amos and Amina Mama, and plans for a new Black women's press in London, Black Woman Talk, indicate that women of colour in Britain have a similar need for and are finding the means to create autonomous cultural resources. The writing and publishing of women of colour represents one of the most exciting and politically significant cultural phenomena during this period. Although not nearly enough writing is yet available, as a result of a global movement of women of colour our invisibility is finally a thing of the past. □

Barbara Smith is a Black feminist writer and activist who lives in Brooklyn, New York. Her most recent book is Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology. *She is a founding member of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, which will have a stand at the Book Fair.*

Elaine Feinstein

Hamburg

For Martin

You gave us all the riches of the city
opera, pool-halls, all-night
Café Stern, cold Pils, and laughter;
the taste of coffee
with the first newspapers

and Isestrasse, over the canal,
street market stalls piled up
with edible truffles, beans
of black locust, poppy-seed buns,
and living fish.

We watched three carp swim there
in a glass tank; and knew
the bite of each grim
Asian jaw was meant to crush no more
than muddy weeds against a horny palate,

fierce yet vegetarian.
When the strongest fish leapt out
slap at our feet, it was your hand
that checked my squeamish terror.
My bold son,

learning to live without protection now
other than grace and beauty,
how I bless your spirit, as I
call up voice and face
to give me courage in this lonely place.

FICTION
Angela McRobbie

Cross winds

The Border
ELAINE FEINSTEIN *Hutchinson* £6.95
Blow Your House Down
PAT BARKER *Virago* £7.95 & £2.95
Fly Away Home
MARGE PIERCY *Chatto* £8.95
Moll Cutpurse, Her True History
ELLEN GALFORD *Stramullion* £4.95

There is a clear radical strand which runs through all these books. In each case, the often dangerous consequences of taking up a critical and challenging role are explored. The tone is unswervingly realist, the context firmly social and the effect to stir rather than stun the reader into engagement. In Elaine Feinstein's **The Border** the radicalism is almost involuntary, but it has, nonetheless, a cumulative force. Her subject is one which continues to haunt, influence and fascinate a generation of post-war socialists, more interested in culture than in theory and more drawn by doubt and uncertainty than by cold, Eastern-bloc Marxism. It is fitting then that at the heart of her narrative lurks the shadowy figure of Walter Benjamin, wandering round late-Thirties Paris with death pills in his pocket. He still manages to inspire a fellow intellectual, also in exile, and it is around this man and his wife, Inge, that much of the narrative is based.

She is a Jewish scientist who shows faith both in their ailing marriage and in their ability to escape. He, a man with a precious and inflated sense of his own intellect, is not so sure. I may have been reading against the grain of the text but Hans struck me as excessively self-absorbed (only an adoring mistress temporarily rids him of his misery). Eventually the couple are forced to follow the fateful journey to Marseilles. Benjamin poisons himself along the corridor from their room, Hans is mysteriously shot, perhaps by the Soviet secret police (which would make sense historically) and Inge survives to tell her story and pass over diaries, letters and poems to her historian grandson. *The Border* is in the end inconclusive. What is most striking is that, despite the extreme conditions, the same old emotions refuse to disappear. Marital battles are fought out and adultery carries the same passion and excitement. *The Border* is a novel to be read more for its spirit than for its sense of direction.

Blow Your House Down lacks, I think, both spirit and direction. It is set in the industrial North where a series of murders similar to those by the Ripper are being carried out. The novel traces the responses of those women who feel most under threat. It's 'gritty', 'tough' and 'hard-hitting' in the tradition of much British Sixties realist writing. Barker certainly avoids patronising the women she describes. They are, without exception, poor, and prostitution is better paid than the only

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other work available — gutting chickens in a local factory.

There are two problems with the book. First that to attract the attention of the reader Barker is forced to go along partially with the conventions of the thriller. Much of the writing orbits around the death of two women from within the community. This means that the same old atmospherics have to be conjured up, the darkened street and the vulnerable lonely figure tottering along in high heels. As though to counteract this Barker has one of her characters stab the main suspect. But I'm not sure this works. What more can be done with the image of the prostitute? From Walter Benjamin to Martin Scorsese she has been a figure who represents a challenge to the hypocrisies of conventional sexual morality, but *always* she is punished: possibly because in one sense she also challenges the men themselves. For women it's a different matter. Prostitution is simply a dangerous, demeaning way to earn a living, and this is what comes across most strongly in *Blow Your House Down.*

Houses burn, rather than blow down, in Marge Piercy's new novel, **Fly Away Home.** There is no doubt that Piercy can write in a style which is both popular and political. This she manages by being modest in intent and unconcerned about proving her poetic credentials. Instead, she carries the reader along in a wave of enthusiastic storytelling and hi-energy emotion. *Fly Away Home* charts the break-up of a suburban mother's marriage and the slow recognition by this woman of her husband's cruelty and arrogance, as well as his underhand, even criminal, property deals. He is, it transpires, a slum landlord who subcontracts out arson attacks. Daria is befriended by a tenants' group formed to protect homes and track down those responsible. Eventually her husband turns his wrath on her and their old family house. Daria is forced to move into the inner city.

From this point on Piercy allows herself, perhaps romantically, to summon up all the warmth and sensuality to be found in small pleasures, which is so much her hallmark. It works for me anyway. The smell of early morning coffee drifting down through the tenement block; the cosiness of living somewhere where people feel free to drop in; left-wing lovers not smitten down by melancholy: all of this along with a deep commitment to seeing justice win. I don't imagine that any reader would be surprised when the violence of the husband is directed towards his uncooperative ex-wife. What is much more significant about a book like this is that it reminds us here that small political struggles continue in Reagan's America, even if not much is heard about them on this side of the Atlantic.

Moll Cutpurse was apparently an infamous lesbian in Shakespeare's London and Ellen Galford here recreates her life, adventures and relationships. Cutpurse certainly had a sharp sense of sexual politics. Apart from being intermittently a fortune-teller, pick-pocket and thief, she and her lover managed to save one witch from being burnt and countless women from unwanted pregnancies. Still, Cutpurse herself remains a little wooden, as though the writer was more drawn by the image than by a desire to grapple with her nature: I found her gruffness unendearing. □

PAPERBACKS
Sara Maitland

Talking aloud

THE ENERGY generated by the Women's Movement continues to manifest itself in diverse forms: but one of the most obvious is the seemingly endless production and consumption of books 'about women'. Inevitably these range from the genuinely feminist to the simply opportunist and from excellent to banal (not always the same range it should be said). It can be a hard and in some ways wearisome business picking one's way through, especially at the moment when the First International Feminist Bookfair has created a focus and spawned a glut of volumes. This is but a selection of some of them.

Easily the most moving is Beata Lipman's **We Make Freedom** (Pandora, £4.95). Lipman, a white South African, left home in 1963, but returned quietly last year to record South African women — mainly black — talking about their lives. Anyone who claims still to doubt the practical daily pain of apartheid — never mind the true justice issues — should be obliged to read these strong, courageous, dogged voices. Obviously Lipman was selective and committed to making a point; all her women are articulate and still engaged with the grinding system; but there is diversity too; women from a range of class and educational backgrounds, with wider or narrower perspectives, politically active or not, and from both the cities and the 'homelands'. I was actually moved to tears rather frequently by the book; not just tears of pity, but of awe and admiration also. I found this a beautiful book and one which should help to expand the concerns of the British Women's Movement.

As interesting, and much nearer home, is Sallie Westwood's more analytic book **All Day Every Day** (Pluto, £5.50). Westwood, with the co-operation of both union and management, spent a year on the shopfloor of a British hosiery factory, talking to the women workers there. Using her experience and interviews, she explores the inter-relationship of work and home. Her argument, persuasively presented,

Cath Jackson

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Elizabeth North
Barbara Pym
Lynn Seymour
Elizabeth Smart
Muriel Spark
Han Suyin
Virginia Woolf

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is that, despite the richness and resistance of shopfloor culture, the structures of women's work themselves play a major part in the construction of 'femininity' and women's subordination; and that management, unions and the women themselves collude in this process. Both evidence and argument are fascinating in themselves and she does write well.

There are problems of course; like too many liberal anthropologists, Westwood never seems to question how her presence and project may have affected the culture and the responses. Certain questions — like how the women felt about feminism itself — are not asked. Above all the implications of her argument, particularly about romance and marriage, need to be put in the context of a wider range of work situations and cultures. But the suggestions — particularly as she selected a factory with a high percentage of black workers and builds questions about race into her investigation — are challenging. The complex entanglement of class, gender and race are opened up by this book for a fresh sort of examination.

The complexities of her analysis and the quality of her writing expose the crudeness of Tony Cliff's **Class Struggle and Women's Liberation** (Bookmarks, £4.50). In a high-speed and highly selective romp through working-class history he argues that autonomous feminist organisation is unnecessary and diversionary; that a concept of gender oppression is bourgeois and trivial and that *all* that is needed to end the subordination of women is to get them out of their homes and into the organised revolutionary labour movement. Well, yes, but. Westwood's suggestion that the workplace itself is a powerful force in creating and confirming the ideology of sexism should suggest to Cliff that it is all a little more complex than that.

Although it would not be entirely fair to use the USSR as a stick to beat Cliff with, the weakness of his argument is further demonstrated in **Moscow Women** by Carola Hansson and Karin Liden (Allison & Busby, £3.95). They are two Swedish women who 'unofficially' made taped interviews with 13 Soviet women. In Russia, where most women have been incorporated into the work force and where women's 'equality' is enshrined in law, the promised liberation seems not much closer. The circumstances of making the tapes and the sorts of women willing and able to participate make this book highly selective and the format — asking all the women the same questions — inevitably angles the research. But this is not an anti-Soviet book. The authors, as much as the interviewees, point out the many advantages of the system, and also offer some historical and sociological reasons for the apparent passivity of many of their subjects, and for their nostalgic, romantic view of the 'feminine role'. What does emerge is that a theory of equality based solely on the workplace and taking no account of family and sexual ideology places many Soviet women under an intolerable work load and a psychic oppression. The authors, in interspersed little chapters, do outline the legal and social background of Soviet women, but more analysis or a more analytical approach to the interviews would have given this book more substance.

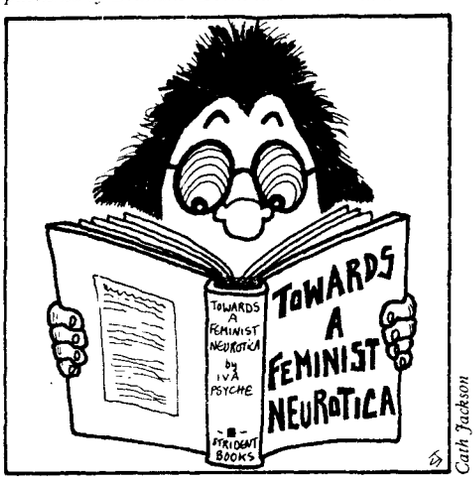
I can't help noticing how many of these books are based on interviewing techniques. There are good reasons for this within feminist methodology, but no one should be deluded into thinking that this will inevitably lead to good and useful books. **Public Faces Private Lives** by Cary Cooper and Linda Thompson (Fontana, £1.95) purports to show us 'famous women talking about their careers and private lives'. The authors further claim that the book will 'offer guidance to women who are looking for ways of managing their lives and relationships so that they can develop and maintain their identities'. Actually, however, it is an opportunist con. In the first place, all the women are media stars, Petula Clark, Toya Wilcox and Esther Rantzen for example — with two journalists thrown in to represent 'serious' professions. Secondly, the book is very random with very few sustained quotations as opposed to snippets, no context and no sense of clear individual voices. The book is little more than gossip and since almost all the subjects were, very sensibly, extremely restrained, it isn't even very juicy gossip.

Women Who Do and Women Who Don't (join the women's movement) (Routledge, £5.95) is another book that aims to let women 'speak for themselves', this time by collecting individual contributors' essays together. Robyn Rowland started out with a really interesting idea — to find committed feminists and committed anti-feminists and ask them why and how they ended up where they did. Unfortunately, it has not turned into a very interesting book. This is partly because much of the writing is simply dull — from both sides. But more I think because, although the editor appears to have given her 24 writers a free hand, her own intention is explicitly irenic: she wants to show that somehow really we're all women together and have similar 'psychological profiles' (strong parents and a good sense of self) and these little disagreements about theory wouldn't matter so much if we all understood each other better. So apart from Joanna Bogle who comes splendidly clean ('I feel extraordinarily antagonistic to women's libbers. . . I frankly see them as a peculiar and rather frightening mixture of government bureaucrats and irritable middle-aged ladies who are gleefully spoiling and demoralising my generation'), everyone is wondrously polite and understanding. Real hard-liners and extremists from both camps are excluded or diluted: no radical separatists, no puritanical religious fundamentalists; and so no exposing of the unbridgeable gaps of pain and threat, nor any rigorous examination of the intellectual theories about the nature and construction of gender difference. Hence there is no flavour of either movement: unity cannot be brought about by personalising politics (as opposed to the reverse) or by obscuring real differences.

Finally, if you want to know what is actually happening in the British Women's Movement, the Women's Press has produced the volume to follow *No Turning Back* (1981). **Sweeping Statements** (as well as having one of the most delightful covers I've seen in ages) is an embracing selection from the women's movement's own writing over the last two years. Edited by Hannah Kanter, Sarah Lefanu, Shaila Shah and Carole Spedding and costing £5.50, it witnesses to the continued energy and commitment at the grass roots and to the growing breadth of the movement. Inevitably it is a bit bitty and there are omissions — there's no section on the arts or feminist 'culture' for instance. And the volume implicitly raises certain questions: why, for example, are socialist feminist theorists — particularly in the fields of history and representation — now writing so much more outside the women's movement's own publications than inside. An internal defeat? A co-option by Left establishment intellectuals? A victorious movement forward? A sell-out?

The book is impressionistic, but the impression it gives is a positive one. Both for finding a sense of connectedness and for future historical use this is an invaluable collection. □

Sara Maitland is co-author, with Aileen la Tourette, of a collection of stories, Weddings and Funerals, *to be published by Brilliance Books later this month.*



Cath Jackson

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PSYCHOANALYSIS
Jean Radford

Travelling in

Women: The Longest Revolution
JULIET MITCHELL *Virago* £5.95

One of the distinguishing features of British feminism in the last 15 years has been a *prickly* yet sustained dialogue with psychoanalytic theory. Starting from the American situation, Friedan (1963) and Millett (1969) both offered the statutory critique of Freud as a sort of Bluebeard in the patriarchal castle. Although Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971) contained a similar chapter, 'The Psychological Sell', it was a more perfunctory dismissal — as befitted the different development and importance of psychoanalysis in Britain and the USA.

Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate* (1971) and its sequel *Psycho-analysis and Feminism* (1974) told a somewhat different tale: the Viennese phallocrat was turned back into the scientist whose analysis of patriarchal society was useful to feminists.

Her new collection of essays reads like a narrative of these years as well as the story of one woman's intellectual development. The title essay was written in 1966, before the women's liberation movement started in this country. It engages not so much with the possibilities of psychoanalysis as with the failure of socialist analyses of the family. Identifying four inter-related 'key structures' — production, reproduction, sexuality and socialisation — Juliet Mitchell argued that the transformation of all four structures is necessary for women's liberation. While the changes taking place around sexuality (the essay appeared shortly before new laws on divorce, abortion and homosexuality) were 'a possible force for liberation', she claimed that, without corresponding transformations in the other spheres, these advances were reversible or recuperable.

Re-reading it nearly 20 years later is instructive. In photo-copied form the essay became what *New Left Review* would call a 'seminal' text for socialist-feminists, so it's excellent to have it available in book form.

In the essays which follow, the initial concern with the family under capitalism develops into a more detailed focus on processes within the family: 'How do we become ourselves — men or women?' The deliberations on equality and love, femininity and narrative, hysteria and motherhood are all linked with this question and, while various theoretical inputs of the 1970s are clearly visible (Levi-Strauss, Althusser), there is a progressive reliance on psychoanalysis as a conceptual framework for the writing.

The science and ideology debates and the anti-humanism which marked Left theories of the 1970s are here taken up in relation to polarisations in psychoanalysis between Lacanian and humanistic schools. Though giving full weight to the Lacanian critique of the humanist element in psychoanalysis (for example in 'ego-psychology'), Juliet Mitchell argues that the 'reforms' it can bring about, the greater freedoms possible within a specific ideology, are enabling and not to be disdained. For the Lacanian attempt to cut through humanism as an illusion and Lacan's model of the Symbolic Order carry with them the risk of theorising the human subject in a too general, a-historical Order.

> The danger of the humanist approach is that it may propagate a more tolerant version of the present state of things and thereby confirm them; the danger of the Lacanian method is that it may subvert it only by not noticing it.

This essay, 'Psycho-analysis: A Humanistic Humanity or a Linguistic Science', ends with a call to relate the 'two Freuds', but the reservations that Mitchell expresses about the Lacanian method seem to me substantial. They thus provide an interesting parallel with the recoil from Althusserianism of the late 1970s.

THE GROUP of literary essays on novels by Brontë, Meredith, James and Defoe raises questions about the construction of femininity in narrative, but by far the most interesting comments on women and writing are made in the section of pieces on psychoanalysis. There can be no specifically female writing, no separate subversive space from which the woman novelist can disrupt phallocentric discourse, she argues. Any disruptions will have to be made from within the same discursive structure. By examining the psychoanalytic model of child development which underpins the 'separatist' argument, by returning once more to *Wuthering Heights* to illustrate Brontë's critical use of given forms, Juliet Mitchell makes a convincing case.

> The woman novelist is necessarily the hysteric wanting to repudiate the symbolic definition of sexual difference under patriarchal law, unable to do so because without madness we are all unable to do so.

Women: The Longest Revolution is then a suggestive set of essays, but it reads, for me, as more than this. In the introduction Juliet Mitchell says that being a writer is not for her an identity but a way of working through problems, that each essay is a struggle for 'a sense of solution — always necessarily false, or at best temporary'. What then is the sense of solution sought or available here?

Self-criticism was not, she states, a part of this

First International Feminist Book Fair & Book Week

These are just a sample of the scores of events being organised to coincide with the Feminist Book Fair itself (7-9 June, Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden, London) and the Feminist Book Week which follows (11-17 June, nationwide).

To find out what else is going on, ring the following numbers: **London** 837 9666; **Eastern Region** 0223 356852; **East Midlands** 0602 626543; **Merseyside** 051 708 7270; **Tyneside** 0632 611499; **North West** 0524 63021; **Southern England** 0865 247300; **South East** 0273 28357; **South West** 0272 211369; **West Midlands** 021 773 6572; **Yorkshire** 0274 753657; **Wales** 0248 351263; **Scotland** 0224 645433; **Ireland** Dublin 716367.

Workshop on feminist science fiction led by Marlene Barr. Friday 8 June, 2pm. The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies Street, London WC1 (637 8270). Adm 50p.

Short story writing workshop led by Suniti Namjoshi. Friday 8 June, 2pm. St Matthew Meeting House, Brixton Hill, London SW2. Adm 50p.

International Lesbian Writers' Celebration with Audre Lorde, Suniti Namjoshi, Gerd Brantenberg, Giovanna Tato and Nicole Brossard. Friday 8 June, 8pm. The Drill Hall (for address, see above). Adm £3 (£2 concs). Creche.

Platform performance by Aboriginal poet and oral storyteller, Maureen Watson. Saturday 9 June, 11am. Cottesloe Theatre, The National Theatre, South Bank, London SE1. Adm £1.50.

Workshop on book jacket design. Saturday 9 June, 2pm. The Drill Hall (for address, see above). Adm 50p.

Black and Third World Women Writers' evening. Saturday 9 June, 8pm. St Matthew Meeting House (for address, see above). Adm £2 (£1.50 concs).

'Different Concepts of Women's Liberation — Internationally' with Petra Kelly, Toni Cade Bambara, Faith Bandler, Dorothy Nelson and Robyn Archer. Sunday 10 June, 8pm. Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8. Adm £3 (£2 concs).

Writing workshop for women writers with Audre Lorde. Monday 11 June, 12 noon. Africa Centre, 38 King Street, WC2 (836 1973). Adm 50p. Women only.

Discussion on non-sexist, multi-cultural children's books. Monday 11 June, 7pm. Writers and Readers Bookshop, 144 Camden High Street, London NW1. Adm 30p.

Workshop on publishing. Tuesday 12 June, 12 noon. Africa Centre (for address, see above). Adm 50p. Women only.

An evening of community and working-class writers. Wednesday 13 June, 7.30pm. Sisterwrite Bookshop Cafe, 190 Upper Street, London N1 (226 9782). Women only.

Discussion on socialism and feminism with Bea Campbell, Sheila Rowbotham, Dacia Maraini and Anja Meulenbelt. Thursday 14 June, 8pm. Central Library, Phillimore Walk, London W8. Adm free.

Reading by Indian author Suniti Namjoshi. Friday 15 June, 6.30pm. Silver Moon Bookshop, 68 Charing Cross Road, London WC2. Adm £1.50 (£1 concs)

Discussion on publishing feminist plays led by Michelene Wandor, followed by a performance by Little Women Theatre Company. Saturday 16 June, 7.30pm. Putney Library, Disraeli Road, London SW15. Adm free.

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project. Yet the brief introductory notes to each piece make it clear that this *is* a construction, a *reading* of her own political evolution and the continuities and discontinuities within it. The style itself registers these: the assured, declarative voice of the first essay with its almost complete absence of first-person statement ('The discussion which follows does not pretend. . . The lesson of these reflections is. . .') is typical of Left writing of the period; in the later writings, the use of the personal pronoun and the increased use of metaphor signal that the highly prized rationality has become qualified by a new sense of complexity: the complexity of the speaker's position as well as the issues addressed.

In a year which has seen the publication of several books by feminists looking back (Greer, Boycott), it's doubly good to read one which so tenaciously pursues the question of sexual difference, which *poses* the relation between motherhood and hysteria for women without falling for one or the other.

And for those joining these debates, in a period with a very different political agenda from that of the Sixties and Seventies, this collection tells *one* version of the story so far. Since the longest revolution still has a long way to go, this is both necessary and valuable. □

Jean Radford teaches literature at Hatfield Polytechnic. She is currently working on two books: one about Dorothy Richardson and one about narrative positions for women.

Sylvia Kantaris

Some untidy spot

In memory of Meryon

Tragedies happen anyhow, in corners, when
other people
are working or just walking dully along,
as Auden said, thinking of Brueghel's Icarus
who fell into the water in the space between
two glances, and then into the painting,
then the poem,
as if the whole Aegean was not wide enough
to hold the impact of the moment of
your death.

As grass

And equally, in death we are in life
as in a dream of crossing our own path
and weaving in and out of other lives, as if
there were no end and no beginning to be read
into the humps and mounds of knotted grass.
I can see, easily, that all of us
are grazing on the green flesh of the dead
and breathing our own breath — at least
so long as I have words and am intact
and there is still grass to compare them with.

FILMS
John Coleman

Sneaks and ladders

'Nostril-flared boredom' from Rupert Everett as Guy Bennett in *Another Country*

Another Country (15)
Odeon, Haymarket
Heart Like a Wheel (PG)
Screen on the Green; Classic, Haymarket
Man of Flowers (18)
Screen on the Hill
Strangers Kiss (15)
Gate, Notting Hill
To Begin Again (PG)
Minema
For Love or Money (15)
Phoenix
Blind Date (18)
Screen, Oxford Street

Not having seen the play I am in time-saving ignorance of where and how Julian Mitchell may have adjusted his original in re-writing it for the screen. No matter: the first thing to note about **Another Country** is that it looks and sounds throughout like a film. Its debutant director, Marek Kanievska, of Polish parentage and educated at a South London comprehensive, comes from considerable experience in TV and — on this handsome evidence — proved a crafty choice. For the setting, of course, is the intrigue-nurturing hothouse of a grand English public school in the early Thirties, to which Kanievska may well have brought a properly jaundiced eye; and the theme is that of an élite being taught hypocrisy rather more efficiently than anything else, a handy, mannered blandness imprinted for a rise to the top in later life. And perhaps the strongest element in creating this habit of double-think is the homosexuality so thickly in the air, reckoned okay as long as seen as a passing phase, engaged in discreetly and denied if discovered.

Which is where outrageous, witty, romantic and desperate Guy Bennett (dashingly well acted by Rupert Everett) will fall foul of his house-mates. No prizes for hazarding which real-life character inspired this instinctive rule-breaker. Nor, come to that, for detecting the ghostly presences of Esmond Romilly and John Cornford behind Bennett's *Das Kapital*-reading pal, Tommy Judd (Colin Firth, also excellent). Many of Bennett's antics arise from a sort of nostril-flared boredom: his disdainfully unfair umpiring of a house-match, his deliberately sloppy turn-out at an OTC parade and inspection, which loses his house a cherished pot. For this his peers sentence him to a beating, which he escapes by doing the caddish, sensible thing: threatening to go to a master with an account of his homosexual experiences, naming names. Faces blanch round the judgment table.

Some time before this, Guy (and, for all the persuasive diversity — from liberal unease to confirmed fascism — of those around him, he is the occasion's absolute centre) has fallen deeply in love with young Harcourt (Cary Elwes) who dares to dine clandestinely with him in town and creeps out at night to lie with him in a punt. This centre surely cannot hold. And eventually he is caught by his arch-enemy despatching a compromising note to Harcourt. This time he not only accepts the indignity of a caning, but loses an honour (membership of the school's most exclusive society, the Gods) he felt guaranteed and, however otherwise cynical, profoundly desired. 'Life is ladders, Tommy,

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that's all,' he had earlier confided to Judd, outlining his breezy future career. Now he has slipped at a crucial beginner's rung. Which is shown as the truly traumatic turning-point in what is to come. 'What better cover for someone like me than total indiscretion?' he asks Tommy. And, just as the film opened with a wheelchaired Guy being interviewed 50 years on in his Moscow flat by an American woman journalist ('Fame or infamy — what does it matter?', he peacocks to her), so it closes with a swift cut back, or forward, to that same interview. And it is impossible not to feel sold short at this glib bit of motivation. Did this Bennett (or Burgess) really turn to spying because he failed to be made a God? That's what the brusque editing implies, harmfully simplistic after the rough sophistication of so much that has gone before.

Jonathan Kaplan's **Heart Like a Wheel** is a respectable small movie which appears to have wowed them over the water: the screen biography of Shirley Muldowney who, starting out in the mid-Sixties, went on to become a hot-rod racing driver, overcoming male prejudice to win the world championship on three occasions, the last in 1982. En route she broke up with her husband, an inspired mechanic; had a prolonged affair with a married, bed-hopping top driver, who managed her burgeoning career after he was disqualified for fighting on her behalf; ultimately fired him, both from bed and board, when her adoring son John and another young pal took over maintenance and encouragement. As the incredibly determined Shirley, Bonnie Bedelia gives a pretty incredible performance, going from teenage bride to seasoned champ with compelling naturalism.

This is as well, since a little hot-rod racing goes a long way, and fast. The almost family-album kind of structure lets a lot of humanity into Shirley's struggles in a masculine world and both Leo Rossi as husband Jack and Beau Bridges as lover, manager and rival Connie Kalitta maintain the strain of authenticity. But, admirable though she may be, it is frankly hard to like Shirley Muldowney very much, though God knows Bedelia works at making her sympathetic. One is more likely to remember tiny instants of pained distaste, as when son John (Anthony Edwards, when the lad has grown up) turns away as she and cocksure Connie embrace; there is a similar, understated moment of displeasure as her mother looks on. I suppose it all has something to say about a woman's gotta do what a woman's gotta do.

Dutch-born director Paul Cox lives in Australia and his very good-looking and eccentric **Man of Flowers**, with some wild dialogue supplied by Bob Ellis (who also plays a loonie psychiatrist) makes an agreeable change from such Aussie excesses as those *Mad Maxes*. Norman Kaye is mild-voiced, middle-aged, 'artistic' Charles, rich and Oedipally screwed-up; he has recurrent, home-movie dreams and flashbacks to boyhood scenes involving his ripe-lipped mama and stern papa (Werner Herzog passing through). Every Wednesday a charming young girl, living with a yobbo of an action-painter, comes to strip for Charles and $100 to arias from Donizetti. As soon as she has dropped the last garment, Charles rushes across to the local church to pound an organ. Lesbianism and murder figure, as does a comic postman. Melbourne has never been more elegantly photographed than by Cox's Russian emigré cameraman Yuri Sokol. I laughed gently till about midway through, then grew increasingly bemused.

Matthew Chapman's shoestring **Strangers Kiss** also benefits from the black-and-white and colour camera-work, by Russian Mikhail Suslov who left his homeland in the Seventies, which contrives some astounding effects in depth and from high, high overhead. Peter Coyote, with a Raymond Massey snarl, is a Hollywood director in 1955, making a movie by starring the mistress of a crook who hands over a wad of notes in weekly instalments: the tormented hood wants to keep his Carol (delectable Victoria Tennant) happy. Coyote, who is evidently producing something very like Kubrick's 1955 *Killer's Kiss*, wants to get Carol to fall for the boxer leading man (unprepossessing Blaine Novak, who wrote the original script, abetted by Chapman) and vice versa: he direly succeeds. A scene worth waiting for in this oddity revolves hilariously round the absurdities of shooting a film kiss.

Short shrift: José Luis Garci's **To Begin Again** hammers Cole Porter's 'Begin the Beguine' remorselessly through the return visit of a dying Nobelled Spanish novelist to the seaside town he left in '39 and an old flame: tasteful to the point of insipidity. **For Love or Money** is a handful of archive confetti and an earful of arrogant slogans compiled by four Australian women, masquerading as a documentary celebration of 'working women's courage, resilience and humour'. **Blind Date**: so don't keep it. □

ARCHITECTURE
Jules Lubbock

Lost cause

WHEN THE public inquiry into Mr Palumbo's proposal to erect a Mies van der Rohe tower next to the Mansion House opened on 1 May, I wrote that the result would decide the battle between modernists and conservationists, and the future shape of British architecture. Little could I have foreseen that the Prince of Wales's brilliant speech at the RIBA's 150th anniversary banquet (to which, as usual, I was not invited) would ensure that, whatever the outcome of the inquiry, the Modernist cause in Britain is now lost. The Prince's well judged endorsement of community architects (the constructive side of his speech that has not been adequately reported) will assist these dedicated pioneers to heal the social and environmental wounds inflicted by their professional colleagues.

Like James I over Moorfields, the Prince has responded to the voice of his people and used his power wisely to champion their feelings about a gang of hooligans who have hijacked architecture and who seem to despise the needs and pleasures of ordinary people.

If Mr Palumbo is to be remembered for more

Threatened: the Mansion House's current, discreet, Victorian neighbour

than joining the Hooligans and Boycotts in donating his name to our language — palumbering is a word of inpalumberable richness of meaning — one hopes that he will listen to his Prince's suggestion, as the Earl of Bedford listened to Charles I over Covent Garden in 1631, and try a community approach. Let him withdraw his scheme and agree to an effective system of public participation to ensure that the people, not princes, patrons, pundits or architects, get something they like.

This has not been Mr Palumbo's month. First there was the *Sunday Times* profile by architecture critic and High-Tech groupie Deyan Sudjic with its barely veiled threat that, as Chairman-elect of the Tate Gallery Trustees and leader of a modernist cabal including Richard Rogers, Mr Palumbo's tactics were to 'disable your opponent as fast as you can' — his opponent being the Director Alan Bowness, whose policy was 'turgid' and 'very British'. Bowness called for and won a vote of confidence and Mr P. got the push. One hopes that Messrs Palumbo and Sudjic have now learnt that this is not the way to do things.

These events coincided with the evidence of Sir John Summerson, the authority on the history of Metropolitan Improvements, in support of the Mies scheme. Sir John happens to be Bowness's uncle by marriage, but he is also a gentleman who loathes bullying behaviour. With noticeable relief and great grace he conceded under cross-examination that, on the evidence of his own scholarly publications, the threatened buildings were indeed a unique survival of the great Victorian rebuilding of the City and therefore, regardless of their lack of major architectural quality (their very virtue lies in their not competing with the Mansion House portico and the spire of St Mary-le-Bow), a prima facie candidate for protection under the DoE rules. Personally he still supported the Mies scheme — but that carries no weight. Palumbo's case against the conservationists lay in ruins.

Most of the architect witnesses lived up to my description of them as 'comedians'. An exception was Richard Rogers, whom I personally complimented upon the engaging sincerity with which he responded to cross-examination. He took the hackneyed line that

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great architecture was created by great architects and patrons: forget the citizens — they would catch up eventually.

But he had no convincing reply to the point put to him by the beguiling innocent Celia de la Hey for SAVE, that the 'public have already had twenty years to catch up and still don't like shoeboxes'. His case was weakened still further when he proved incapable of distinguishing a photograph of a building by Mies from a mere Miesian imitation. He tried to persuade the Inspector that the new piazza would be one of the greatest and most popular in the world, like his own Pompidou Centre in Paris which attracts over seven million visitors annually; but he was floored by Ms de la Hey's observation that an office block could not be as attractive as a major international art gallery. His claim that the Mies tower would harmonise with its classical neighbours because it too was classical was shot to pieces by Sir John who agreed under questioning that, by his own published definition, only a building with columns and capitals could properly be called classical. Palumbo's architectural case was in tatters.

Finally Mr Palumbo's estate agent argued that, unless the demand by major international banks for prime quality offices in the heart of the City was met, London's position as the financial capital of the world would collapse and, with it, the economy of the whole country.

As the Inquiry resumes the ball is now in Mr Palumbo's court to bow to public opinion and come up with a truly imaginative stroke. □

THEATRE
Naseem Khan

Black and white

Julius Caesar
SHAKESPEARE *Barbican*
The Time of Your Life
WILLIAM SAROYAN *The Pit*
Kipling
BRIAN CLARK *Mermaid*
Chilli in Yor Eyes
Tara Arts on tour

For a play that talks so much of honour, there's curiously little of it to be found in **Julius Caesar**. Consider the record — betrayals, conspiracy, self-interest, murder. Ron Daniels's RSC production leaves you in no doubt about the true nature of things. A visually spare first half gives you a sober version of events — a Rome in which a deluded Brutus (Peter McEnery) is balanced by an opportunistic Antony (David Schofield), and in which there are no heroes. 'Liberty, freedom! Tyranny is dead!' rings hollow even as the words leave Cinna's mouth.

In its move from Stratford to the Barbican, Daniels's production has lost the video cameras and TV screen that it sported. What it does retain however is a quality of detachment, which I imagine was the point of the hardware. And, although the martial comings and goings of the second half make for more vigour, movement and energy — with some wonderful dingy effects of battle — this is glory with a sour taste. Sharp vignettes spring out. A fresh-faced Young Cato bounds defiantly on to the field calling his name out like a knight in mediaeval lists. From the smoke emerges a row of robot-like armour-covered soldiers who dispassionately cut him down. At the end ironically fulsome chords accompany Octavius' postscript to 'this glorious day', as the lights dim on a muddied field and trampled banners. How far Daniels builds on what is actually in the text is another matter. (And on the debit side, he should have been sterner on that peculiar back-of-the-throat gargling diction occasionally indulged in by Shakespearean actors.) But it makes for as thoughtful and challenging a production of this uneasy play as you are likely to see.

That feeling of backbone was something **Time of Your Life** could have done with. It spread like a kind-hearted jellyfish all over the acting area of the Pit, right up to the very toes of the spectators. Since the temperature was warm, this was not an unpleasant sensation. For while in the main house corrupt man was having a field day, downstairs the revival of Saroyan's engaging 1939 play gave us man perfectible. In 'the lousiest dive in Frisco' (according to its owner, Nick) congregate a collection of the world's waifs and strays. Mostly they gravitate to the table of the enigmatic Joe (Daniel Massey), who sanctions their dreams with an extravagant and eccentric largesse. 'Money is the guiltiest thing in the world — it stinks,' he declares, as he turns it rapidly into limousines for the hopeless, a new life for prostitute Kitty Duval (Zoë Wanamaker), champagne for all the quirky, crushed idealists who finds their way to Nick's Pacific St Saloon.

Originally the play belonged with the work of the Group Theatre movement, sharing in its aims to reflect issues of the day. It's curious, in that case, that reality is at such a remove. To be sure, Saroyan builds in the hard facts of life. A corrupt cop tries to ruin Nick's little Eden. The piano player collapses through lack of food. A strike goes on outside, over which two old friends — an activist and a humane cop — amiably argue. 'We are all so lousy,' reflects the cop. 'This is a *good* life!' But it's wallpaper, not part of the essential fabric or the argument of the play. Only occasionally is there a sense of real pain. For all that, it can hardly fail to send you out with a smile on your face. Stories in which all the frogs turn out to be princes are, after all, delightful. Howard Davies's production wrings the last bit of warmth from the play, backed up by admirable ensemble acting and first-rate performances.

Kipling, there's no doubt from Brian Clark's reconstruction at the Mermaid, had no desire to be discovered to be a prince rather than the frog he is frequently considered. In fact he had no desire to be investigated at all. He should be known simply from his work, declares Alec McCowan grimly, in the persona of Kipling, irascibly pacing the Turkey carpets of his Sussex home. The guided tour that he gives us to the man via the works (and augmented by some distinctly unhelpful back-projections) is a skilful one. Kipling is more complex than his reputation — a man who could be incensed at the treatment of the common man by 'idle overlings' yet hoped a strike would continue 'till the very name of miner stink', who detested the Boers for 'unspeakable racialists' yet supported 'the White Man's Burden'. McCowan presents this rounded picture superlatively.

The juxtaposition of *Kipling* with **Chilli in Yor Eyes**, the new touring show by the Asian Tara Arts Group, brings the Empire back home. Tara's working method is to develop a show out of group research and improvisation. In this case, they based themselves in Newham, with its National Front history; using local experiences, they have shaped an engrossing but essentially under-focussed story of five young Asian lives.

Set in Wimpy bars, youth clubs, round pool tables and in squats (suggested by the cast and occasional change of a chair), it reflects a wide range of well founded issues, which include hypocrisy within the community itself as well as racism outside it. Some of it is moving, some funny (the Tower Hamlets school audience with whom I saw it was gripped and laughed a lot). But it needs far more of a shaping hand (as well as the cast not to sing, which they don't do well). Yogesh Bhatt's direction confuses activity with pace. But Tara performers develop steadily. Paul Bhattarcharjee and Naushaba Khan in particular are a joy to watch. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

New moon

I WISH I'D CAUGHT on to the first series of **Shine on Harvey Moon** (ITV). It's like Dennis Potter's *Pennies from Heaven* without that Heath Robinson plot to struggle through. *Harvey Moon* doesn't unfold; it proceeds, at a halting, lifelike pace appropriate to its subject and period: demob London, the search for peace, normality and lodgings. It grabs your recognition with a few broadly-drawn stereotypes, then hangs flesh on them. The characters thus operate on two levels: expectation and surprise, as in life.

The first instalment of the new series was not without incident, however. We saw Harvey's home destroyed by an unexploded bomb, his spell in a hostel with war-buddy Lou ('Neil' from *The Young Ones* in a related portrayal), his installation in a gaslit attic with Mum, his jilting by a classy Dutch broad and the suspicion of a reconciliation with his wife Rita, who narrowly misses becoming the last victim of Neville Heath, whom she has picked up in the hotel where she works. I do hope Rita doesn't take him back. The wonderful, rangy, libidinous Maggie Steed, so well-named, is better employed cocking a hip at passing talent in the hotel than settling down again with the secretly

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dull Moon, whose soul probably benefits from her denial of pre-war cosinesses. I loved her slapping up a bit of flowered wallpaper in a spare moment, wielding the scissors and paste with more thought for expression than precision, then handing it all over to Moon and dashing to work: 'Oh that's lovely, Harvey, 'cos if it dries it'll go to waste.'

The language is almost too warm-blooded for nostalgia. A person is permitted to be an arse-hole and Lou is not 'a long streak of piss, he's just under the weather'. Well, either Lou has a prior commitment to The Young Ones in Heaven (BBC) or he's going to be one of the one in five who survived pulmonary TB in those distant smoggy days. We shall see. Or I shall, anyway.

Without its bright red backgrounds and high-energy casting hype, Tom Stoppard's **Squaring the Circle** (C4) would have been an average Open University programme and well worth watching earlier in the day. I kept wondering who he'd written it for and came to the conclusion that it must be for the Poles themselves; a nervous, disciplined attempt to suppress everything that makes a (Stoppard) play worth watching, in favour of a political diagram, for export only.

Stoppard's hero-worship of Walesa turned him into a cut-out for my money. Here is the limit of his characterisation: 'He's no intellectual, but sharp. He's got the workers behind him like a football hero' — which we sort of knew and feared already. A single glimpse of the monster behind the moustache gave the lie to the play's crippling orthodoxy: 'I have six children and my wife will never forgive me for getting mixed up in this. I shall have to give her a seventh.' No sooner is this out than Stoppard instantly readjusts the halo and there's no more talk of Mrs Walesa.

There is no shortage of proof of his political cunning however. When the strike is broken by the party his friends say it is an attack on Solidarity. No, says Lech, it is an attack on the government's agreement with Solidarity. 'That's the way to play it.' The hint of Mr Punch is never developed. Walesa answers his invisible inquisitors like a mixture of Oscar Wilde, the Delphic Oracle and Jesus Christ with his 'Render unto Caesar' pitch. 'That's party talk,' says some faceless figure (there are many). 'No,' goes our hero. 'That's the language of democracy, stolen by the party.' But redeemed by Stoppard perhaps?

Is Walesa a hero? I always assumed he was in it for the power like any other politician; more of an Ubu Roi than a Jesus Christ, except that Jarry never allowed himself to take politics seriously. When The Joke happens here it has the nervous respectability of a titter at prize-giving: 'I move that from now on we only work on Tuesdays.' 'What, *every* Tuesday?' The most interesting bit, for me, was when the old boy in the pub interrupts the tedious narrator to give him a potted history of Poland. His explanation made me understand Jarry's choice of country for Ubu: 'King of Poland, that is to say nowhere.' Apart from that, the Brechtian distancing devices distanced me right upstairs to bed.

But then politics is always a pillock. It has an element of hearsay and conjecture about it: the exact opposite of conversation, as if you had to describe the human condition with the aid of matchsticks or a night out in semaphore. If only we could limit political exhortation to these media, what a happy place the world might be.

A far more absorbing description of power politics, set where it belongs in the bosom of the family, was **The South Bank Show**'s dramatisation of Ivy Compton Burnett's **Elders and Betters** (ITV) marking the author's centenary and the completion of Hilary Spurling's biography. The pre-WWI story is short, but wide. Head of the family Suki has a weak heart and a history of whimsical will-changing which always returns to her sister Jessica's large family in the end. Now her daughter-in-law Anne makes her play at a marvellous tea-party. Tension pops between her and Jessica as their children make burnt offerings to the god 'Chung'. There is black magic everywhere. Ravens browse on the dining table. The house is awash with autumn and smoke. As Suki dies she gets Anne to burn the latest will made out in her favour. Anne burns the old one, then causes Jessica to commit suicide. There are ambiguous rites with flaming crosses and careering hearses as Suki and Jessica are buried at night in the garden, or seem to be. Even the family name of Calderon suggests a witch's broth where right and wrong are stirred. 'I forgive Nature nothing,' says a young man. The story seems to be a long cry of hatred at the god who took away the author's beloved brother in the war and her sisters in a double suicide. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2825 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Modern versions, please, of 'A Policeman's Lot is not a Happy One'. Max. 16 lines, by 22 June.

No 2822 **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Old Testament stories retold to take account of God's femaleness.

Report **By Mercy Dash**

You haven't made our lives any easier this week. She-who was to have appeared in person but the closing date found her door locked and a much-slimmed down comp folder lying in the corridor with agitated scribbles all over it. The gist of these, as far as I can make them out, is that She had hoped for a modicum of insight, a soupçon of vision, and is paralysed with disappointment at having been served up instead with a God who fussed over the exact placing of the continents, created little fluffy bunnies, left the Ten Commandments in her other handbag, worried about muddy footprints in the Ark and *nagged*. She appears to send her congratulations to the few who escaped this 'narrow rut of conventional masculine thought' and asks — could it be plaintively? — why there weren't more women entrants. She is now in retreat and not to be disturbed and, if I were Len, I wouldn't go around saying 'over-reaction' quite so loudly.

Anyway, I'm offering five Newtons (Her maximum) to O. Banfield for the kind of neat reversal which I think She had in mind but, to be fair, also to Noel Petty for the most economical of the Creation-as-house-arranging stories, and to each other author of a revised version printed here.

Who can find a virtuous man? His price is far above rubies, and no woman would be fool enough to pay it.

O. BANFIELD

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And God said, let there be light: and there was light.
And God hesitated and said, Could I just see the darkness again?

NOEL PETTY

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. . .
And the Lady God formed woman of the dust of the ground, and breathed into her nostrils the breath of life; and woman became a living soul.
And the Lady God planted a garden eastward in Eden. . .
And the Lady God said, It is not good that woman should be alone, but I am buggered if I am making a man. And the earth became null and void.

R. J. PICKLES

Adam: Be a darling, Eve. I can't tell Her I nicked the fruit — the bloody woman'd have me thrown out.
Eve: OK! Anything for peace.
Some hours later outside their tied garden
Eve: Don't blame me. I told your lies for you.
Adam: Oh yes? Who put in that crap about a snake? You and your phallic fantasies!
Eve: It wasn't anything we *said*. Why didn't you tell me you'd fixed 7 for drinks?
Adam: 7 or 8 — what's it matter?
Eve: If you'd said it was 7, She wouldn't have caught us with our fig-leaves down and what's worse, you holding a pair of apples in front of yourself and saying, 'What's *She* got that I haven't?'

FIONA PITT-KETHLEY

And when Jehu was come to Jezebel, she went out to him *saying*, Why *should* my face be painted for thee?
And he said, It is written, that thou shalt be cast to the dogs, and thy body consumed, and the dung be cast *on thee*.
And she said, I have not read it.
And Jezebel said, Lo, this is a *man* that thinkest he knoweth it all backwards; and she laughed at him.
Wherefore waxed Jehu *exceeding* angry, and cried out, Let her be thrown from the topmost window.
And Jezebel said, We are on the ground floor, and God hath constructed me a bungalow, besides the which, I have only cats about me.
For dogs liked Jezebel not.
And lo, Jehu was lost in wonder, whereat Jezebel laughed in *his face*, crying Thou hadst better come up with another one, O Jehu; for I am not simple Chummixah.

WILL BELLENGER

And God guided her chosen people through the wilderness, appearing to them as a pillar of salt by day and a pillar of the community by night.
And, inasmuch as there was little of sustenance in the wilderness, She laid on packed lunches at strategic intervals.
And when the Children of Israel came to Mount Horeb, God called Moses up the mountain to commune with Her.
And when he reached the summit, the prophet found there a tablet of stone, upon which it was written: 'For Baal's sake shave off that ridiculous beard and stop coming on so bloody patriarchal. Oh, and do us all a favour and get yourself circumcised.'

PETER NORMAN

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FIRST PERSON

Anne Smith

Sari squad

WHEN MY EDITOR told me this column would appear in the *NS* at the same time as its books pages would feature women's writing, ideas swarmed towards my write brain as thick and fast as sperm to the ovum. The one that got there first would have produced a sober sermon for the converted on how men's fiction is always, unfairly, more highly praised and valued than women's.

I would have tied this in with the movement to politicise fiction, to use degree and kind of political content as a critical criterion, which seems to me to be crass, irrelevant and counter-productive. Then I found a split between my writer/critic self and my political self and, before I knew it, I was deep into a serious comparison of Barbara Pym and Sapper ('Mills & Boon for boys' was a friend's shrewd comment on Sapper and his ilk), while trying to justify my wholehearted approval for Pluto Press's new series of left-wing thrillers. That way madness — not to mention convoluted sentences — lies, so I abandoned it in favour of a simple appreciation of two women writers whose work I have read and re-read recently with ever-increasing understanding and pleasure.

It is almost coincidence that both writers are Indian. Perhaps I should, but I never do set myself the daunting sort of reading-programmes I've stumbled upon in the homes of friends. These tend to be headed 'May-June: Third World Women Writers' and tailed by a list as long as your arm of titles that make university reading lists in Anglo-Saxon lit. seem positively attractive by comparison. But there *was* something political in my impulse towards Eunice de Souza and Anita Desai. Fear and loathing of Raj syndrome came into it. Some sort of prophylactic against the national vanity of the British, that causes them to regard other peoples as merely providing the exotic backdrop against which, for a change, to enact their little class dramas, is necessary now and again, just in case.

But never mind politics; never mind feminism: both these writers are in their very different ways outstanding, and I'll seize any excuse to enthuse about their work. Eunice de Souza is a poet. Her latest book, *Fix*, spoke straight to me, in all its irony and poignancy, from every line. Two of the short witty ones may impress her genius on you:

Omen
Today
that utterly respectable
big brown clock
in the college staffroom
decided to move its hands
backwards
No one is surprised.

My students
My students think it funny
that Daruwallas and de Souzas
should write poetry.
Poetry is faery lands forlorn.
Women writers Miss Austen.
Only foreign men air their crotches.

I hear that Virago is considering publishing *Fix* here. The quicker the better is all I can say. I feel like quoting the whole lot right now.

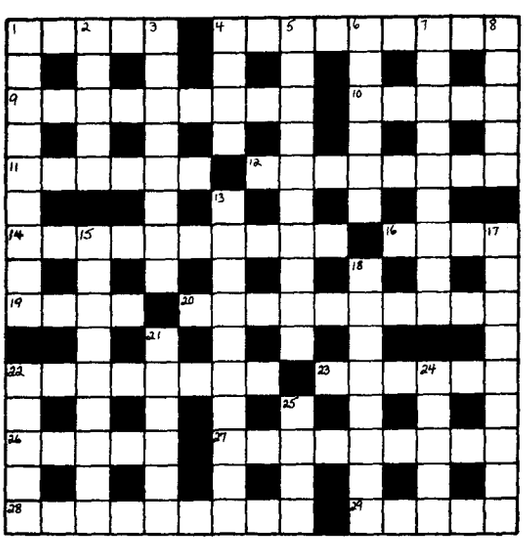
Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, Booker runner-up a year or two ago, is well enough known already. Her earlier novel, *Fire on the Mountain* (Heinemann, £4.95), is so original, spare and fine that when I try to sum it up in a sentence I can only find clichés. If I had room, one other thought that I'd like to have pondered in this issue is how boring it is to find that 99 per cent of new fiction is about middle-class heterosexual love-affairs. Anita Desai doesn't write about that; she writes about the more crucial relationship of people to themselves, about the struggle to reconcile the spirit to the realities of experience in time. Her short stories are superb. 'The Accompanist' (*Games at Twilight*, Penguin) is on a par with the best of Bashevis Singer.

Even if I hadn't used so much space in devious preamble, I couldn't have begun to do justice to either of these writers. If you don't believe me, read them for yourself. □

A new novel by Anita Desai, In Custody, *will be published this autumn by Heinemann.*

Weekend Crossword 1442

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 19 June.



Name _____

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_____

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ACROSS

1. As a philosopher I am included in an endless race (5)
4. Timidity keeps company with fighting and gambling (9)
9. The furthest may be disposed to muster too (9)
10. Everything in this wood is a disaster (5)
11. The weed to annoy (6)
12. Place which has sport after the game is left unfinished (8)
14. Old-fashioned style reminiscent of insects (10)
16. The edge of a wicker box (4)
19. Pull someone over the other side (4)
20. Where a star turns into a bird (10)
22. Bachelors hold almost the opposite of objection to washing facilities (8)
23. A politician in town for trial (6)
26. Got up as a flower (5)
27. Relative with a blush is not proved innocent (9)
28. Scatters of its own nature in town (9)
29. Control an animal (5)

DOWN

1. Where there is a tale about the present article (9)
2. Piece of eight? (5)
3. Import restrictions have one note among the crowns which are circulated (8)
4. Bird makes love in bed (4)
5. It keeps hands on wrist (10)
6. A tucked away place for a holiday (6)
7. It is unwise to be priggish at heart (9)
8. Choose as tragic heroine deserted by artist (5)
13. One of these university men is frivolous and obscene (5,5)
15. It can circulate among children as punishment (9)
17. For man in pub trade is about to finish (9)
18. We are in tears unravelling this garment (8)
21. Ancient brain-child (6)
22. Torch for ardent priest (5)
24. Quietly advocate expulsion (5)
25. The shepherd produces an article on this side (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1441

Prizewinners to 1441

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We would welcome applications from suitably qualified or experienced men or women, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sexual orientation.

For further details contact: **Alan Simpson, NDCRC, 67 Lower Parliament Street, Nottingham, NG1 3BB. Telephone: 0602 586515.**

Closing date for completed applications — **25 June 1984.**

WOLVERHAMPTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

BILSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Bilston Community College is a new tertiary college which will open in September 1984 on the sites of the College of Further Education and Sixth Form Centre. The College will be open access and offer the fullest educational opportunities, full-time and part-time, to the entire 16 to 19 age group and to adults. Applications are invited for the following new posts:

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required to coordinate a team of lecturers providing teaching services in management, supervisory, trade union and secretarial studies, law, accountancy, economics and health and safety at work to a variety of courses at different levels.

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Further particulars and forms of application are available from the **Vice Principal (Staff and Development) Bilston Community College, c/o Bilston Sixth Form Centre, Wellington Road, Bilston, Wolverhampton WV14 6BB. Tel: Bilston 47533.** In addition to a completed application form, applicants are invited to submit a letter of application. *Closing date: 30 June 1984.*

NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR for the Nuclear *Weapons Freeze Clearing House is required.* He/She should have proven experience in campaigning, *fund raising etc.* Bristol based, starting this summer, with an initial one-year contract. Salary £5,000 plus, negotiable. Fuller job description from Freeze Clearing House, 6 Woodfield Road, Bristol BS6 6JQ enclosing large s.a.e.

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Full details and prospectus from: **David Rundle, The Director, The British Institute, Lungarno Guicciardini 9, FLORENCE, Italy. Tel: 010-39 55 284 031.**

EXCHANGE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL staff member wishes to swap 3-bed flat in central Paris for similar in London for one year from Sept. 1984. Please contact 01-833 1771 ext. 5144 or send details of London flat to Personnel Office, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St, London WC1X 8DJ.

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HOLIDAY FLATS/Houses to let. King's Cross, London. Telephone 01-607 4518.

WANTED

ACADEMIC COUPLE require London rental last 2 weeks July. References available. Prof. Gordon U-68 Storrs, Connecticut 06268, USA. Tel. 203429 3834.

YANK HACK, Female, 31, wants airy accommodation, for living & working. Begin July, max. 1 year. Mature, responsible tenant/housemate. Tel. 01-995 9648.

BOOKS/ PUBLICATIONS

CASH PAID for History and other non-fiction. Will collect. (01) 890 9421.

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LISTINGS

FRI 8 JUNE

LONDON Benefit concert for El Salvador & Guatemala. 7pm at Inst. Ed., Logan Hall, Bedford Way, WC1. Isabel Parra, Patricio Castillo, Barricada, Leon Rosselson & friends. £6, £4.50 (some £2.50 unwaged) at door or from ESCHR/GCHR, 20 Compton Terr, N1. **Org El Salvador & Guatemala Committee for Human Rights.**

LONDON International Lesbian Writers' Celebration. 8pm The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St, WC1. With Audre Lorde, Suniti Namjoshi, Gerd Brantenberg, Giovanna Tato. Chair Gillian Hanscombe. Creche. Women only. £3/£2.

LONDON Gay Humanist Group discussion/social with topics 'out of a hat', 7.30pm, Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. Open meeting, all welcome.

TWICKENHAM Public Debate: 'This house believes that it is neither moral nor effective to deploy nuclear weapons in the defence of Europe'. 8pm, York House, York Street, Twickenham. **Org Twickenham CND.**

OXFORD 19thC liberalism — an international perspective. History workshop conference at Somerville College, Oxford, June 8-10. £8/£4 unwaged from HWCSH, Ruskin College.

SAT 9 JUNE

ILFORD Ilford CND meets, Gant's Hill Odeon, 10.30 am, to go to Hyde Park for mass CND march & rally.

LONDON National Federation of Housing Co-operatives 1984 National Conference. 1-7pm, University of London Union, Malet St, WC1. What housing co-ops are, Monitoring of co-ops, Race & co-ops, Role of secondary co-ops, improving opportunities for management co-ops, etc. Entrance £2.

LONDON 'Return to Sender'. Protest Reagan's nuclear policies. March from Hyde Park at 12 noon to Trafalgar Sq 2pm. Peaceful encirclement of US embassy 12-3pm. **Details: CND 01-263 0977.**

LONDON Language, Communication and the Media — a workshop in peace education. 10-4.30. Quakers International Centre, Byng Place, London WC1. £5. **Org Quaker Peace and Service, Pax Christi, Peace Education Project.**

LONDON Workshop to produce Anti-Racist teaching materials. Of interest to teachers in FE and AE, YTS and schools. Bring materials. 10-4pm Paddington College, Paddington Green, W2.

BIRMINGHAM Labour Party Black Sections, one-day conf. to discuss draft constitution for black sections to represent all black people in Labour Party. 10.30am Digbeth Civic Hall. **Details: 39 Chippenham Rd, London, W9. 01-286 9692/221 7050.**

LONDON Black & Third World Women Writers' Evening. 8pm at St Matthew's Meeting House Theatre, Brixton Hill, SW2. Maureen Watson, Jester Tshuma, Ellen Kuzwayo, Fatima-Zara Salah, Rosa Guy, Barbara Smith, Madhu Kishwar, Nawal el Saadawi. Chair Gail Lewis. £2/£1.50.

SUN 10 JUNE

LONDON Olive Branch One. Conference and simulation game. A series of Joint Manoeuvres for peace in Central America. 11-4pm. Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre, SW1. £3/£1.50 unwaged. **Details: 01-359 1836.**

GARTREE Picket in support of and in solidarity with Irish Republican prisoners in Gartree Prison, 1-3pm.

TUES 12 JUNE

LONDON Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom Women's Meeting. 6.30pm 9 Poland St, W1. **Details CPBF 01-437 2795.**

WED 13 JUNE

LONDON Feminist Publishing — An International View. 6.45pm upstairs room, The Freemason's Arms, Long Acre, WC2. An international panel of women discusses origins, audience, themes, politics and practical problems of feminist publishing abroad. **Org Women in Publishing.**

LONDON Cuban Internationalism. One of series of discussions on Cuba today. 7.30pm, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Rd, NW1. **Org Britain-Cuba Resource Centre.**

DARLINGTON 'Jobs Not Bombs' meeting with Jimmy Knapp, Gen. Sec. NUR, Roland Boyes MEP, Mick Elliott, CND. 7.30pm. Dolphin Centre, Horsemarket. **Org Darlington Peace Action & Trades Council. 0325 465556.**

SAT 16 JUNE

BIRMINGHAM Dayschool on Palestine. 10.30 Digbeth Civic Hall. 'Labour and Likud', 'The PLO Today', 'Life inside the Green Line'. **Org B'ham Solidarity Campaign with the Palestinian People.**

LONDON Alternative Technology in the Eighties. 10am-11pm, Architectual Association, 36 Bedford Sq, WC1. **Details: The AT Group, Faculty of Technology, Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.**

LONDON Black and Immigrant Women Claim Our Rights II: Women Count — Count Women's Work. International speakers, workshops, displays, videos, music, food, creche. 9.30-5.30. Full access for disabled; signers, loop. Camden Centre, Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, NW1. Also Sunday.

LONDON Transport for People. A conference on transport. 10.30-4.00. Congress House, Great Russell St, WC1. £2 delegates, 50p unwaged. Spkrs Bill Morris, John Prescott, Jimmy Knapp, etc. **Details: Greater London Trade Union Resource Unit, 01-403 0300 ext 287. Org SE Region TUC.**

LONDON They Shoot Writers, Don't They? A two-day conference at the ICA to examine the effects of censorship in Czechoslovakia, South Africa, Argentina, the Middle East and Britain. ICA, The Mall, SW1. £5 one day/£7.50 both days. **Org Index on Censorship.**

FORTHCOMING

19 JUNE LONDON UN Assoc. concert 7.30pm Royal Festival Hall. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. **Tickets £2.50-£7.50. 01-928 3191.**

23 JUNE PILGRIMS' WAY (Wye to Canterbury) Walk to raise funds for Battersea Arts Centre. **Details: Diana Warden, Friends of BAC 01-223 6557/8/9.**

23 JUNE LONDON '1984 — A Celebration of Women'. Review Our Past. Write Our Future, NCCL Women's Rights Conf. City University. Spkrs incl Dora Russell, Pratibha Parmar, Bea Campbell. **Send s.a.e. to NCCL, 21 Tabard St, SE1 4LA for info.**

25-29 JUNE LONDON Energy Week at Polytechnic of South Bank **Details: Ms Chris Richards, Centre for Energy Studies, Borough Road, SE1 01-928 8989 x 2399.**

1 JULY NOTTINGHAM Mass Trespass at Chilwell Ordnance Deport — 103rd US base. **Details: Reclaim Chilwell, c/o Nottingham CND, Environmental Factshop, 15 Goosegate, Nottingham NG1 1FE. 0602 581948.**

27-29 JULY NOTTINGHAM Shelter Annual Housing Conference University of Nottingham. **Details: Tim Mars, Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, SE1 8FX. 01-633 9377.**

12-14 SEPT BRADFORD 'Peace Studies in Higher Education' Conf. org. for those who wish to write/speak on their experience of Peace Studies teaching and research and those who wish to learn. **Contact: James O'Connell, School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, W. Yorkshire. 0274 733455.**

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CONFERENCES

NATIONAL DAY CONFERENCE
on
Community Employment Initiatives

Date: Thursday 28 June 1984
Venue: The Council House, Nottingham
Speakers from: GLC Popular Planning Unit, Sheffield City Employment Department and the Wales TUC

Further details from: **Andy Muter, Community Skills Project, Dept. of Town and Country Planning, Trent Polytechnic, Burton Street, Nottingham. Tel: 0602 418248 extn 2591.**

The Sixth Michael Harding Memorial Address

'Gayness as God's Choice'

by Sheila Bngqs

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GROUPS/ MEETINGS

THE DELTA SOCIETY is a Jewish cultural & social group for unattached, 35+ men and women, meeting in North West London weekly. For details phone 01-902 2991.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, Programme of activities. Sunday 10 June 8 pm. Informal Q/A Meeting. 'The Bhagavad-Gita as Yoga'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

SOCIETIES

NINE MEN'S MORRIS. Will anyone who regularly plays this fascinating board game kindly contact T. A. Layton, founder of the 9MM Society, 3 Sussex Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 2WD.

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PSYCHEDELIC POSTERS wanted — any subject/rock posters. 121 Kimberley Rd, Penylan, Cardiff.

HEARTSEARCH

AMIABLE, GENTLE MAN, generous disposition, 48, consultant, seeks attractive, lively female, to share wining, dining and theatrical experiences on frequent London visits together, with closer encounters. Photo appreciated and returned. Box 8535.

ARE YOU a lively minded individual, 18-80, enjoying the arts, discussions, conferences, rambles, dancing? The Progressive League caters for Mind, Body and Intellectual Stimulus. And it's so cheap. Ring 01-452 8358.

ARTISTIC, INTELLIGENT, attractive woman, (5' 9"), 30, seeks tall, intelligent man (25-38), non-sporty, solvent, culturally aware, for theatre going and lots of cuddles. Box 8524.

ATTRACTIVE, WARM, SEXY, humorous 34-year-old, divorced Scorpio woman, unlucky in love so far, would like to be courted, enjoys cooking, walking, reading, animals and Scotland, seeks gentle kind man, 30-40 who also enjoys the simple life. Essex based. Returnable photo appreciated. Box 8536.

ATTRACTIVE ELEGANT female, 31, who loves wine, music, books, theatre, Renoir, seeks intelligent, cultured, humorous, handsome male, 30-40. Greater Manchester and nearby areas. Box 8522.

BASICALLY CHEERFUL North London man, early fifties, seeks lady friend to share a joke or two and possibly a few other life enhancing activities. Box 8446.

BORED EAST Anglian graduate male teacher, 26, seeks female 20s, for companionship, sharing interests (literature, music, walks, food, life), and more, given right chemistry. Box 8509.

CARING MALE, 53, London, materially poor, affectionate, erotic, romantic, radically liberal, turned off by disharmonious Thatcherites, Bennites and conformist dinner party type of starched shirts, seeks mutually caring relationship with non self sufficient woman. Box 8490.

CARIBBEAN GRADUATE wishes to meet a genuine literate female, under 40, with varied social interests — sport, dancing, Continental travelling, wine bars. Box 8480.

CASTAWAY OPTIMIST, 37, needs uncomplicated friendship of attractive, spontaneous woman, 25-40, to reorientate. Alternative type, loving, good listener/talker. Photos exchanged. London/environs. Takers? Box 8494.

CAUCASIAN MALE living Kensington, loves travel, good food, wine, and beautiful, intelligent women, seeks kindred soul; age, nationality (Eastern could be interesting), religion immaterial. You can be 17 or 70 but must love life and living. Telephone essential. Box 8527.

CRICKET LOVER wanted by cricket loving female, (48, div.), London based, for days at Lords or Headingley or Old Trafford or Edgbaston. Solvent, non Tories preferred. Box 8523.

CRI DE COEUR. Attractive woman, auburn, not slim, seeks caring male, 60-70, permanent relationship/possibly marriage. Lonely man preferred. Box 8521.

CULTIVATED WEST Indian seeks similar female preferably unwed and under 40. She should be a good conversationalist, adaptable and enjoy meeting people. Box 8481.

CURE SUMMERTIME Blues! Left, literary and loving, London-based man, 30, seeks friendly, happy-go-lucky woman, to share finer feelings and aestival activities. Box 8530.

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DECISIVE, WELL adjusted, intelligent man sought by music-loving, sociable, articulate, indecisive career woman, late forties, NE. One reply may please. Box 8538.

DIVORCEE 53, SLIM, 5' 9", intelligent, sense of humour, self-supporting, cottage near Oxford, enjoys life, seeks man for long or brief encounter. Photo available. Box 8526.

EDUCATED, WELL-BRED, tall Indian, aged 44, divorced, various interests, seeks correspondence from ladies irrespective of race. Visits welcomed later. Returnable photo please. Box 8505.

EMBOTTLED BRIT., lecturer (historian), immature 57, 5'6", warm, tender, sometimes witty; mateless castaway in America, now uncorked for summer England (London, Oxford, Severn/Wye, Wales). Seeks his elusive heart-mate: 35+, petite, adventurous, merry, loving, adventurous, and able/willing uproot a while. Share pleasures (Mozart, wine/seafood, secondhand bookshops, travel, nature, conjugal bliss) and what else life may bring. (Allow 1-2 weeks for contact). Box 8539.

ENTREPRENEUR, resident in Bayswater, 55, interest in politics, music, water sports, and outdoor life invites replies from ladies who consider themselves amusing, adventurous, chic and 'with it'. Box 8528.

EXTREMELY HANDSOME unemployed young man, 23, needs looking after by caring, older, brainy female socialist. In return for lots of love and affection I will be your faithful and honest friend. Anywhere. Box 8507.

FEMALE GRADUATE, early 40s, independent, warm, centred, supportive. Loves job, friends, conversation, books, wine, theatre, seeks similar male 35-50 (I'm tired of younger men!). London/Home Counties. Box 8502.

FEMALE GRADUATE, 31, fun-loving, foreigner, leaves UK in October, seeks professional, non-smoking, unattached, affectionate and witty male for a memorable summer. Yorkshire. Box 8504.

FINE LADY, 55, own house, good job, wishes meet cheerful man fond holidaying abroad, perhaps start joint venture, lovely surroundings. Box 8462.

HOLIDAY IN FRANCE. Bourgeois Gentilhomme, non socialist, seeks lively, sophisticated lady, forties, to share leisurely 2/3 week car tour through French countryside this summer. Box 8396.

IS THERE a woman divorced/widowed, 45-55, disillusioned in her search for a man willing to share wide interests, arts, travel with another? Box 8531.

LADY WHO did it her way, but remains an Ovaltiney at heart, seeks man with divine sense of humour as friend. London easiest. Box 8491.

LONDON WOMAN, 35, sensitive, intelligent, with sense of humour, enjoys literature particularly, also art, music, long country walks, seeks communicative and lively man. Box 8519.

MALE, 17, wishes merely to write to any ladies of absolutely any age, anywhere, for friendly correspondence. Box 8532.

MATURE STUDENT, 32, black, average intelligence, warm-hearted, feels lonely & shy, music & outings lover, seeks sensitive, sincere, understanding woman for friendship & romance etc., 20-35, any nationality. Photo & tel. no please. Box 8475.

MIDDLE-AGED FEMALE: socialist, graduate, wants company 12 Aug.-1 Sept. camping Loire (motor caravan). Perhaps also join her in mornings only French course, there. Own expenses. Box 8506.

MALE TEACHER, 33, would like to meet good natured, humorous woman, 30-40, for sincere, stimulating friendship. Photo appreciated but not essential. Box 8457.

YOUNG SOCIALIST, age 26, wishes to meet young girl of similar outlook. Box 8511.

MUCH TRAVELLED, exceptionally slim, smart switched-on lady, divorced, 45, seeks sophisticated, slimmish, sexy male counterpart, for mutual entertainment. London/Surrey area. Box 8516.

NORTH CHESHIRE/South Manchester area, professional divorcee, early fifties, varied interests, non-smoker, would like to meet man for outings, holidays, possibly lasting relationship. Box 8529.

OPTIMISTIC, ATTRACTIVE professional woman, widow, eclectic interests, seeks friendship of unattached, well educated/graduate male, 48-58, who enjoys life. Box 8508.

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PRESENTABLE MAN, late 40s, well educated, sensitive, seeks attractive female, professional, 30s, for lasting, loving relationship. Box 8503.

PRETTY DIVORCEE, mid-30s, NW3, blonde, 5' 8", aware, communicative, mature in outlook, would like to meet men who enjoy women's company. Box 8545.

PROFESSIONAL CHINESE, 50s, quiet, caring, warm-hearted, unattached, wishes to meet lady (age unimportant), London area, for companionship or love as situation develops. Box 8525.

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 30, interest in music, theatre, cinema, seeks company of an interesting, outgoing female. Yorkshire. Box 8520.

RARE & ATTRACTIVE English bird, 30s, Bach enthusiast, awaits call from non-smoking, musical gentleman with interest in the caring professions. Central Southern England. Box 8501.

REDUNDANT? RETIRED? Adventurous? Soon-to-be ex-academic, divorcee, considering new options/compatible companions for projects, travel, theatre — everything I had no time for. Box 8510.

RESPECTABLE, ATTRACTIVE, well-educated woman, 40s, unattached, living North London, would like to meet professional, educated Englishman, 40 plus, for sincere, lasting relationship. Box 8515.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST artist, (31), looking for intelligent male friend (32-40), with long-term relationship in mind, for cultural pursuits. London area. Box 8492.

SOCIALIST PROFESSIONAL male, 39, slimmish, slightly workaholic, interests: politics, good food, books, music, likes living alone, seeks attractive, independent, intelligent uninhibited, sensuous woman o.n.o. for happy, non oppressive relationship. Box 8518.

TALL, ATTRACTIVE woman of warmth and vitality, early 40s, London based, Israeli, Indian empathy, seeks personable man of intelligence and integrity. Box 8517.

TALL MALE, 46, energetic, prosperous, intellectual, very busy, sense of humour widower, dramatic life but stable personality, warm, kind, active in charity work, left-of-centre, wide range of interests incl. theatre, cinema, dining out, classical music. Needs warm, attractive, stable (fairly) successful, sensual, intelligent (30-50) lady, view marriage. Photo and phone number appreciated. No prejudices. Box 8455.

TALL, UNATTACHED, middle class, affable male wanted by 5ft 3in. divorced, quiet non-smoking secretary (53), N. London for stimulating relationship. Box 8087.

TWO FRIENDS (male 58, female 50), attractive professional people, interests in the arts, seek couple for friendship and exploration of common interests. London/surrounding areas. Box 8194.

UNATTACHED FEMALE, Guardian reading ex-social worker, 58, would like share interests of parity, disparity with fairly contemporary male. Arts, plants, people. W. London. Box 8512.

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VIVACIOUS, GOOD-LOOKING woman (50), slim and active, with many interests including art, theatre and history, would like to meet established, professional man, who needs warmth and affection from a caring, intelligent partner. Box 8493.

WILD BEAUTIFUL Powys. Professional lady, 52, divorced, slim, not unattractive, seeks company kindly, unattached, non-smoking gentleman. Concerts, theatre, tea with cats and homemade jam. Box 8496.

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